Rugby Union International: Scotland 10 South Africa 35

Springboks douse Scottish fire

Robert Armstrong at Murrayfield

BOBBY SKINSTAD spearheaded an inexorable Springboks revival that swept the world champions to an emphatic five-try victory after they had spent half the afternoon struggling to impose their authority on the Scots.

The exciting 22-year-old Western Province openside, who won the Man of the Match award, used his athletic skills and adaptability to generate the momentum that enabled the Boks to score 24 points in a one-sided second half.

It was further proof that the Springboks, who have won 16 internationals on the trot, have the capacity to dig themselves out of trouble whatever strategy their opponents dream up.

Ireland and England, who stand between the Boks and a Grand Slam, will take heart from a tenacious Scottish performance.

If Skinstad was the Springboks' main inspiration, their captain Gary Teichmann was never far behind in carrying the ball into the eye of the storm and setting a committed example that steadily doused Scotland's fire.

It is a measure of British rugby's low expectations that a 25-point margin of defeat was greeted by the Scottish coaching staff as a moral victory. No one could deny the courage and sound organisation that created a semblance of equity in the tight and the loose, but they have only managed one try in each of their games against the Maoris the previous weekend and here last Saturday.



Tug of war . . . Scotland's Brian Redpath tackles Joost van der Westhuizen at Murrayfield

Scotland were unable to profit from a 15-7 penalty count in their favour, a reflection of the Springboks' failure to come to terms with the European interpretation of the tackle law in the eyes of the English referee Chris White.

Duncan Hodge, preferred to Gregor Townsend at fly-half, missed kickable penalties and marred his positive general play by giving away an interception try, Pieter Rossouw collecting his chip kick and racing to the line.

For a lengthy period it was hard to shake off the suspicion that the Springboks had dropped down a gear and were doing just enough to pin down the industrious Scots in harmless areas of the field. Each time the Boks decided to raise their game they usually scored a try.

The Scottish forwards were happiest when they stood toe-to-toe with their counterparts. However, once Skinstad, Johan Erasmus and the scrum-half Joost van der Westhuizen began sniping around the fringes, it needed a prodigious effort by Eric Peters and Peter Walton to stop the green shirts running amok.

The Scotland coach Jim Telfer was relieved to have avoided a repeat of last year's 68-10 defeat by the Springboks. "We can take as much pride in our performance as South Africa," he said. "I cannot fault our effort — John Leslie at centre brought an extra dimension to our play."

Scotland did themselves no favours by bringing on their substitute backs Kenny Logan and Gary Armstrong long after the cause was lost. By then Hodge's 28th-minute try at the posts from a slick Peters pass was a distant memory. From the moment Erasmus sent Stefan Terblanche racing clear for the Boks' first try shortly before half-time, there was only one outcome in prospect.

In the second half Van der Westhuizen snaffled the ball from Alan Tait on halfway before sprinting to the line; Andre Snyman scorched home close to the posts; and Rossouw was swift to punish Hodge's carelessness. At the death, Skinstad got his name on the score-sheet with a spectacular gallop to the posts. It was business as usual for the Boks.

Eddie Butler adds: at Stradey Park, Llanelli the Pumas of Argentina stormed into their tour match against Wales on an overdose of adrenalin which ultimately cost them the match 43-30. It is not the first time that the charge of indiscipline has been levelled at the Latin visitors.

At the outset they were all over the place, giving away penalties and throwing their arms around — and their fists — but then they pulled themselves together and produced some of the most controlled forward play you could ever wish to see. Wales survived because of their newfound collective spirit and no mean degree of brilliance, which is a tribute to their New Zealand coach Graham Henry. But it was a close run thing.

Cryptic crossword by Mercury

Across

1 People from Job Centre turned up in town (8)
5 Head waiter gets at you in the exit (3,3)
9 Their USA supplier of dictionaries (8)
10 Hidden inside was a crumbling bone (6)
12 Instant divorce supporter (5,6)
15 Something you get down from (5)
17 Ambush a student, in other words, during the interval (3,2,4)
18 Simple-minded people love taking foreign money into pubs (9)
19 Imagine a beastly mother about to enter (5)
20 Not believing that ICI sale is fixed (11)
24 Coloured ring on cooker (6)
25 Very attractive way to win a boxing match? (8)
26 Squeeze through with a small child (6)
27 Says one objects to annoying things, including rubbish (8)

Down

1 Pie rises at cooked food shop (10)
2 Ruling out reducing LP distribution (10)
3 Smallest article in case is taken out (5)
4 To run cable car then needed permission (5,7)
6 A strip performed in it will be uninhibited! (9)
7 Monster function upset soldiers (4)
8 Large book given to crossword compiler (4)
11 My one exotic spider is a good source of income (5,7)
13 Appeared with a mongrel found by accident (4,6)
14 Fires caused terrible mist dead in the centre of America (10)
16 Figure of rector wanting other ranks' fish (9)
21 Implied a spiteful woman's upset by sex appeal (5)
22 Cereal firm requiring very many hands? (4)
23 Caught a man with a seat after a party (4)

Last week's solution

World Cup qualifier: England 23 Italy 15

England escape to victory

ENGLAND, dogged and none too disciplined, were grateful to escape Italy's stranglehold with a dodgy-looking victory in last Sunday's combative World Cup qualifier, *writes Robert Armstrong at the McAlpine Stadium, Huddersfield.*

Tries at the end of each half by Dan Luger and Will Greenwood just about saved England's blushes after the Italians had battled their hosts to a virtual stalemate, getting within a point of parity in a nail-biting finale.

The England coach Clive Woodward had the tactical sense to throw three fresh forwards, Tim Rodber, Richard Hill and Graham Rowntree, into the cauldron with a good half hour remaining, which steadied the ship.

Any lingering doubts about Italy's status were comprehensively swept away by a performance that often upstaged England in terms of continuity and technique. The visitors displayed immense commitment throughout, hitting the rucks and mauls with controlled fury. Massimo Giovanelli, their captain, set a high standard with his unrelenting work rate while the open-side flanker Mauro Bergamasco showed a pace and aggression that gave England's defence a searching examination.

Notwithstanding Italy's determination to tackle hard and often, they made a rod for their own backs by straying offside and allowing Paul Grayson more shots at goal than were healthy. The England kicker eased his side into a 6-0 lead after a dropped scrum and a high tackle on Greenwood presented him with short-range penalties in the opening 10 minutes. Diego Dominguez proved similarly reliable, also steering home a couple of first-half penalties.

On the stroke of half-time England capitalised on a spell of fierce pressure. Ben Clarke drove to the left of the posts and when the ball came back from the ruck Matt Dawson and Grayson combined sweetly to send Luger over for his second international try.

At 16-6, any hopes England entertained of building up a comfortable cushion of points evaporated when Dominguez kicked a third penalty for a ruck offence, and on the hour the Italian playmaker dropped a marvellous goal.

But then England shrugged off their shortcomings. Greenwood tried one of his trademark ploys, the short chip and charge from just inside the 22, his markers were caught flat-footed and the Leicester centre plundered an opportunist try close to the posts. Phew!

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The **Guardian Weekly**

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Week ending December 6, 1998

Judges' ruling opens Chile's old wounds

Elizabeth Love in Santiago

THE British law lords' ruling that Augusto Pinochet is not immune from prosecution sparked dancing in the streets, cheers and hugs among hundreds of delighted Chileans last week, while the former dictator's supporters angrily vowed to continue fighting to bring the ageing general home.

President Eduardo Frei said the Chilean government would fight the Spanish extradition request in court. Santiago's position is that a Chilean citizen cannot be tried in a foreign court for acts committed in Chile, and that Pinochet held diplomatic immunity. Its defence of the senator would concentrate solely on legal issues and not address the charges filed against him by a Spanish judge for the deaths, tortures and disappearances during his 17-year rule.

Meanwhile the spotlight has fallen on the British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who has until December 11 to decide whether to give his consent for extradition proceedings to begin or to let Gen Pinochet return home.

Chile's foreign minister, José Miguel Insulza, was dispatched to London and Madrid to argue his government's position. He is lobbying to secure Gen Pinochet's return by claiming that he will face charges in Chile relating to torture, deaths and disappearances. But it became clear this week that the 11 lawsuits against him are not being pursued with any vigour. Few commentators in Chile believe they will result in him having to defend himself in court.

Gen Pinochet's arrest has polarised Chilean society, which had prided itself on a relatively smooth transition to democracy after a 1990 plebiscite.

In a central Santiago plaza last week more than 500 students, human rights activists and Pinochet opponents cheered and clapped when a youth appeared dressed as a law lord, in a black sheet and a wig fashioned from rolls of cotton.

"You can't imagine the joy I am feeling right now, I've been waiting for this for so many years," said Doribia Luengo, aged 71, whose son was executed by the military regime in 1986. "I said to myself I just can't die until I see that justice is done."

Chileans clustered around televisions throughout the city to hear the ruling, which was broadcast live. Many opened champagne and sang the national anthem.

Across town, glum-faced Pinochet supporters gathered at

continued on page 4

Anita Gonsalez (left), who lost her husband, two sons and daughters-in-law during the Pinochet regime, hugs her daughter Patricia in Santiago after the verdict was announced last week PHOTO: CRIS BOURONCLE

Pinochet verdict leaves Jack Straw with nowhere to hide

COMMENT
Hugo Young

IN MORE ways than one, the British law lords' opinions in the Pinochet case are a deep embarrassment to politicians. The immediate embarrassee is the British Home Secretary, Jack Straw. How keenly he must have been hoping that the judges would allow him to glide off the hook.

Had they decided that General Pinochet enjoyed immunity as a former head of state, he would have been back in Chile by now, with the Home Secretary troubling only to fashion the crocodile tears he might feel it expedient to weep for the fact that Spanish justice had been, alas, frustrated. As it is, Mr Straw will be obliged to show us what he's really made of.

But the bilious reflection that the law lords, by three to two, have cast on the conduct of ministers reaches much wider. The effect of their judgment is to ask a punishing question about the moral sensitivity of both Tory and Labour politicians to torture, to hostage-taking, to state-sponsored murder. It is safe to say that no minister since 1990, when Pinochet left office, has even raised the issues the law lords addressed last week, let alone reached the same conclusion about them.

During the Major years, ex-president Pinochet made many visits to Britain. He was received as an honoured friend, and valued arms-purchaser. From his reception in Heathrow airport's VIP suite to his ensconcement at Claridges hotel and his shopping at Harrods, there was never any interruption to his progress. If a question had been raised inside the Tory government, we may be sure it would have received the same answer Baroness Thatcher supplied, when she said Pinochet's services during the Falklands war rendered his arrest in London 16 years later "disgraceful".

Nothing changed when Labour came to power. The general came and went, unimpeded, in October 1997. The regime of tolerance remained the same, which is how it would presumably have continued but for the vigilance of a Spanish magistrate, who turned out to be more interested than any British cabinet minister in bringing a systemic former torturer to justice.

The politicians, in other words, shared a professional indifference to the crimes of Augusto Pinochet. Part of this was doubtless due to a pragmatic analysis which said that Chile had struck a healing concordat within itself, which outsiders had a duty to respect. And besides, there was the matter of trade, in arms and other things.

But also present was a kind of professional ennui among ministers, an inability to reawaken the instincts of their youth, a deadening of moral rigour, about a man who had been roaming free — though not to France, or Spain, or a fair number of other countries that excluded him — for most of a decade.

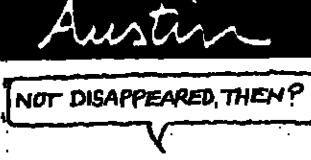
This dullness of basic instinct is what Britain's highest court now challenges. With salutary clarity, the judges have shown up the politicians. They did not need to do so. Lord Bingham, in the lower court, had shown them how to avoid it by declaring that, whatever Pinochet might have done, the immunity of heads of state extended to former heads of state as regards their public acts while in office.

But this was eloquently swept aside by Lord Nicholls and, most notably, Lord Steyn. In place of Bingham's doctrine of passivity, which said the line could never be drawn against immunity prevailing, Steyn destroyed the notion that the legitimate functions of a head of state could include genocide, torture, hostage-taking and crimes against humanity.

These were condemned under international law, and signatories to conventions against them undertook to act against perpetrators coming within their jurisdiction. Pinochet had allegedly presided

continued on page 4

Comment, page 12





Separatists win again in Quebec

Steven Pearlstein in Quebec City

THE separatist Parti Québécois won a narrower-than-expected victory in provincial elections this week as the French-speaking province continued to drift toward a final confrontation with the rest of English-speaking Canada.

With three-quarters of the vote counted on Monday, returns showed that the incumbent premier, Lucien Bouchard, would control 76 of the 125 seats in the provincial legislature, and the federalist Liberal party 48 seats. But the popular vote count showed that Mr Bouchard's Parti Quebecois was in a virtual tie with the Liberals — both winning 44 per cent of the total votes cast.

Although the Parti Québécois's margin of victory was hardly the landslide that polls had predicted, it was a setback for Canada's business and political leaders, who recruited Jean Charest in an effort to end the threat of Quebec's secession.

The vote capped a 32-day campaign that pitted two of the country's most charismatic politicians: Mr Bouchard, aged 59, who honed his separatism in the poor Saguenay region, and Mr Charest, aged 40, whose perfect bilingualism reflected his dual loyalties to both Canada and Quebec. But what was originally billed as a clash of titans turned into a slow denouement as Mr Bouchard shrewdly outmanoeuvered Mr Charest, while tapping into widespread voter satisfaction.

Quebecers appeared unfazed by the prospect of a possible break-up of the federation and warmed to Mr Bouchard's ambiguity on independence. — *Washington Post*

Washington Post, page 13

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Hungary	HUF 500	Switzerland	SF 3.80
Italy	L 3,500		

Saddam the real target of weapons inspectors

ONE crucial point in the Saddam Hussein controversy has never been spelled out. How is the Iraqi government supposed to convince United Nations weapons inspectors that the country has indeed disarmed?

Since a biochemical weapons laboratory can always be hidden in some underground cave, what would satisfy Unscom that Iraq has fully complied with the UN resolution? Indeed, can there be anything that might be accepted as full co-operation or convincing evidence of disarmament?

Unless we are told what it is, we must suspect that disarmament is unverifiable and the UN resolution is a device to inflict punishment on Iraq. Indeed, as the European diplomat quoted by Barton Gellman put it (Mourning Begins for UNSCOM, November 22), this mission could have been "concluded . . . in a matter of months" if Saddam had been replaced, precisely because that has been the real objective all along. But is it a sensible objective when nobody seems to know who or what could take Saddam's place?
Giovanni Carsaniga,
University of Sydney, Australia

THAT Iraq does still have biological weapons is more believable coming from Paul Rogers (Washington's deadly soap opera, November 22) than from Bill Clinton. However, the continuing punishment of the Iraqi people is no more than the usual stupid vindictiveness of the United States (backed up by its toady, Britain) against a nation that has dared defy it, as Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua did before.

Far from undermining Saddam Hussein, the sanctions have entrenched him: ordinary Iraqis, their living standards blighted, their children sick and dying, are hardly going to welcome their persecutors as saviours, and may well think they need Saddam to stand up for them. After all, the Western hypocrites have their own arsenals of mass destruction. A lifting of the sanctions and generous but carefully targeted aid would be far more likely to dislodge Saddam. If such reasonableness is lost on Clinton and Blair, it is because their concern is not with helping the Iraqi people but with dominating, using and exploiting Iraq.
Paul Winstanley,
Palmerston North, New Zealand

SADDAM Hussein deserves a 10 per cent commission from the sale of arms and cost of protection given by the United States and Britain to the Gulf states.

Each time a crisis is triggered in the region, the Gulf states bear the brunt of the financial cost of troop movements and outdated arms to supplied to military forces which have neither the manpower nor the expertise to use them.
(Dr) Peter Kandela,
Staines, Middlesex

High priests of capitalism

WE MUSTN'T blame the inventors of hedge funds for the Long Term Capital Management blip. A properly ordered hedge fund can protect, for instance, contractors who assume obligations in currencies other than their own. Hedge funds took on a life of their own, however, when they began to borrow huge sums to gear up potential profits. Then they became a trick to make easy money. After all, lots of people did make lots of cash.

It was those who lent vast sums to hedge funds upon no security who demonstrated the current state of competence of "risk managers". A decade ago they were lending upon the security of holes in the ground. Now they are lending on the security of corrupt economies. They were rewarded then, as they are now, with huge salary packages and, if the level of their competence justifies it, even larger severance payments.

What the big guys in risk mismanagement knew was that when, not if, whatever Titanic sank, governments would come to their rescue. As they did. Similarly, earlier this year, the Australian government furnished the International Monetary Fund with A$1.5 billion overnight, without a blink of a parliamentary eye, to bail out sinking Indonesia. What happened to that money? I don't know, but I suspect it ended up in the pockets of risk managers who had invested in that insecure economy.

One cannot help comparing the very rich who demand, and get without investigation, vast government hand-outs when the going gets tough, to "dole bludgers". But that would be savagely unfair — to the dole bludgers.

Ultimately it is our politicians who serve us ill. With honourable exceptions politicians are bedazzled by and covet great wealth. That is the altar at which they serve. The risk managers are the solemnising high priests. Theirs is the new command economy.
W A Lee,
Coolum Beach, Queensland, Australia

Middle East contortions

EDWARD SAID says it all (Arafat sells his people down the Wye river, November 15). The Wye River Agreement, as with the previous Oslo Agreements, merely legitimises Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land. Israel's lack of sincerity is evident in Netanyahu's duplicitous prevarications on withdrawal and release of prisoners, and his authorisation of building new settlements in Arab Jerusalem, let alone Ariel Sharon's orders to Jewish settlers to expropriate more and more Palestinian land.

Arafat's regime adds another brutal element to Israel's most oppressive occupation. In essence, Arafat and his police force, under the supervision of the CIA, are merely doing Israel's dirty work and performing the same role as Antoine Lahad and his South Lebanese Army.
(Dr) Ismail Zayid,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

WILL there ever come a day, I wonder, when even one piece of Guardian Weekly Middle East coverage strives for true balance? The November 22 issue is all too characteristic: a headline, on page 4, which cites the halt of withdrawal without beginning to hint at its quite real motivation, buried (with some spin) in paragraphs seven and eight. Then we have Geoffrey Aronson's Le Monde diplomatique essay, which raises the spectre of Israeli settlement-building with no attempt to place it coherently in the context of that nation's history and security concerns.

It would be painfully easy, I'm afraid, to select any other edition at random and find similar examples of reportage, features, editorials — or just simple headlines — displaying the same bias. How long, one wonders, will Israel have to exist as a sovereign state before it wins the same even-handedness all but taken for granted in your coverage of most other international trouble spots?
Richard M Sudhalter,
Southold, New York

Eating habits of American beaver

YOUR article about the return of the beaver to Britain (November 22) includes the statement: "The American beaver fells large numbers of commercially grown conifers." This is erroneous. The main foods of beavers are aspens and willows, with aquatic plants also taken, although they will eat the bark of conifers if need be.

Beavers eat leaves, twigs and bark, and fell trees to get at the tender tops. Heavier branches are used in dam and lodge construction after the bark is eaten. When they have consumed their preferred food supply, beavers always migrate. Dams wash away in spring floods, ponds drain, and "beaver meadows" of lush growth are formed. In about 30 years, when the aspens have regenerated, the beavers will return.

Beavers do not hibernate, though their metabolism slows in winter (southern beavers are out and about all year). When travelling overland to seek mates, they are vulnerable to coyotes, wolves, cougars, wolverines and bears.
Claire Muller,
Toronto, Canada

YOUR unflattering photograph (Beavers are set to return to Scotland, November 22) of my great-aunt Wilhelmina — obviously caught with her hair down — does nothing to strengthen your preposterous claim that beavers were wiped out for the sake of an aspirin hidden up their bums.

Anyone who wants an aspirin knows where to find one. It was their *fur*, damn you, that turned them into sitting ducks.
Disgruntled beaver,
Kyoto, Japan

Briefly

READERS familiar with Isaiah Berlin will have been upset I think, by the somewhat trivial and dismissive tone of Linda Grant's "review" of Michael Ignatieff's recent biography (November 15).

Berlin was a brilliant interpreter of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, both of which have shaped so many aspects of the modern world. His essays give wonderful insights into such disparate figures as Vico, Herder, Mill, Marx and Turgenev.

The "Hedgehog and the Fox" was one of the best things ever written on Tolstoy in general and War And Peace in particular.
Geoffrey Wadhams,
Halesowen, West Midlands

THE recent insistence by China that Japan officially apologise for the atrocities which it committed during the second world war reaches a high level of hypocrisy.

Would it not be more appropriate for China first to consider the atrocities which it has itself committed against the Tibetans before making such self-righteous claims?
Trevor Istance,
Munich, Germany

THANK you for a most enlightening article on Latvia from Jacqueline Karp Gendre (Salutary salutes, November 22). It's a pity she didn't mention that the so-called "patriot" Latvian SS as well as the many ordinary Latvians who took part in the murders of Jews.
Mark Propper,
Randwick, NSW, Australia

HAVING seen a Labour government continue to provide arms to Chile in the late 1970s on the grounds that their legal advisers told them they must abide by international law, one can only hope the current government once again abides by international law and extradites the said criminal forthwith.
Dr Mick Wilkinson,
Hull, Humberside

AFTER the usual catalogue of depressing news, I was greatly uplifted by your feature on Muhammed Yunus's work for the poor of Bangladesh (November 8). He should win the Nobel Prize for Economics, or at least a prize for noble economics.
Meilir Page,
Bellevue, WA, USA

BRITISH beef back on the menu (November 29)? How many are going to return to carnivorous ways on the say so of a handful of agriculture ministers? No, thank you.
Natasha Moorfield,
Bury, Lancs

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Israel faces dilemma over south Lebanon

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

ISRAELI planes and artillery attacked suspected Islamist Hizbullah sites in south Lebanon last weekend as the cabinet reviewed ways to respond to the rising death toll of its soldiers in the zone Israel occupies to protect its northern flank.

Several ministers called for military strikes on Beirut's power and water supplies in retaliation for the recent killings of seven Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah.

The cabinet security committee met after the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, returned from visiting wounded soldiers. "We are looking for an arrangement in which we can [protect] northern Israel without our presence in Lebanon," Mr Netanyahu said. He added that the cabinet would discuss minimising its casualties, not withdrawing its troops.

The foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, has proposed a phased withdrawal, offset by punitive counter-raids if Hizbullah attacks.

He is supported by at least two ministers, according to Hebrew newspapers, but military chiefs oppose him. Public opinion is swinging further away from staying in south Lebanon.

"Israel wants peace negotiations with Syria . . . but we cannot link negotiations with what is happening in Lebanon," Mr Sharon said.

Damascus wants back the strategic Golan Heights, which Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war, and has little interest in reining in Hizbullah.

Asked whether he believed Israel could get out of its Lebanon quagmire without Syrian involvement, Mr Netanyahu said: "We will discuss this in the cabinet. I can say one thing: we know Syria's involvement and responsibility."

Washington urged Lebanon and Israel to "show maximum restraint".

Mr Netanyahu confirmed his willingness to withdraw, provided the Lebanese army was deployed to prevent Hizbullah incursions into Israel, but he said Israel would continue to fight Hizbullah in the 15km-deep zone until a deal was signed.

Talks between Israel and Syria on the future of the Golan have been frozen for nearly three years. In April Israel accepted the 1978 United Nations resolution requiring it to withdraw from Lebanon but said it required guarantees about Hizbullah and the safeguarding of its militia allies, the South Lebanese Army. Syria and Lebanon say an Israeli withdrawal must be unconditional.

Zainur Zakaria faces three months in jail PHOTO: ZAINAL ABD HALIM

Anwar lawyer sentenced

John Gittings in Hong Kong

MALAYSIA'S rule of law was in crisis this week after a lawyer defending the sacked deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim was sentenced for contempt of court amid accusations that the prosecution was seeking to persuade a potential witness to lie.

An arrest warrant was also issued against the defence counsel in a related case.

Mr Anwar's defence lawyer, Zainur Zakaria, was found guilty of contempt after submitting an affidavit from his client claiming that two prosecutors had abused their position. Mr Anwar said they wanted a friend of his to implicate him falsely in illegal sex acts with "various married and unmarried women".

But Judge Augustine Paul said the affidavit was "an interference with the course of justice". He sentenced Mr Zainur to three months in jail without allowing the defence to argue its claim.

This sentence was later stayed by the appeal court until Friday so that Mr Zainur could appeal. Mr Anwar turned to the public gallery and said: "Where is the justice now?"

The British barrister Charles Flint QC, observing the Anwar trial for the English Bar human rights committee, said the proceedings "raise grave concern for the rule of law".

He said: "It appears to be an extreme use of the powers to punish for contempt of court, which will have the effect of intimidating lawyers for the defence."

The case of Mr Anwar's friend Nallakaruppan (known as Nalla) has already caused legal disquiet because he faces a mandatory death penalty for what is normally a technical offence involving a permit for firearms.

Human rights observers regard the case as prima facie evidence that the law is being manipulated for political ends.

The prosecutors Abdul Gani Patal and Azahar Mohamed are accused by defence lawyers of suggesting the death penalty could be dropped if Nalla testified on Mr Anwar's alleged sexual affairs.

Indian voters send stark message to ruling party

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

THE Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata party, which came to power in India eight months ago promising clean government, had its claims roundly rejected by voters last weekend, when it suffered a stunning defeat in assembly elections in four states.

The opposition Congress party captured two-thirds of the seats in the Delhi legislative assembly, which the BJP controlled, and scored an even more dramatic victory by dislodging the BJP in the desert state of Rajasthan.

Congress retained control of the central state of Madhya Pradesh, but lost the tiny northeastern state of Mizoram to a regional party.

"The [BJP] came up with great dreams and large hopes and great promises, and none of them has been fulfilled," said Shiela Dixit, the local Congress leader, as party activists danced through the streets of New Delhi.

The results were seen as a triumph for the Italian-born Congress president Sonia Gandhi, the widow of its assassinated one-time leader. They are certain to embolden those of her followers who are anxious to hasten the collapse of the eight-month-old BJP coalition.

Ms Gandhi said: "I feel the message is quite clear. We have gained a lot of strength."

Although Ms Gandhi has asked Congress to wait for the BJP to succumb to internal feuds and wrangling in its coalition of nearly 20 parties, many of her followers do not share her patience. The party has ruled India for most of the 51 years since independence, and it has not taken easily to a spell in opposition.

Ms Gandhi said that her party would not use the election results to seek a vote of confidence. "We ought not to rush into sudden situations. I wouldn't like to do so."

Despite her reluctance to try to form yet another unstable coalition, or to precipitate the third election in less than three years, the pressure on the BJP is bound to intensify.

The BJP prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, admitted that the voters seemed to want a change, but said the results would have no bearing on the stability of his coalition.

But the recriminations were under way as its allies blamed the BJP for failing to appreciate the public's anger at rising food prices.

Although the BJP tried to appeal to national pride by claiming credit for the recent nuclear tests, voters had a much more prosaic concern: the price of food staples such as onions and potatoes, which increased eightfold in recent weeks.

"This is a verdict of the people. There were problems that could have been avoided," said Ajit Panja of the Trinamul Congress, which has been supporting the BJP. "We warned that price rises are going to touch the public. We are alarmed to see that a government running a coalition is not taking care of the allies."

Mr Vajpayee is also expected to come under pressure from hardliners in his own party who in recent months have coalesced around the home minister, L K Advani.

Clinton repeats earlier denials

PRESIDENT Clinton stood by his earlier denials of wrongdoing last week as he submitted detailed answers to 81 questions from the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, *writes Martin Kettle in Washington*.

He also demanded a "speedy and fair" end to attempts to impeach him.

The president said he had not lied about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, had not asked her to lie, and had not tried to get others to ask her to lie. But he admitted that his "conduct was wrong".

The House Committee is expected to vote on articles of impeachment within the next few days. If the committee comes out in favour, a vote will be held in the House of Representatives, where a simple majority is required for the charges to go forward to a trial in the Senate.

Meanwhile impeachment investigators broadened their inquiry into President Clinton's affairs this week, when republicans on the judiciary committee said they would pursue an investigation into the issue of campaign fund-raising.

A republican aide was quoted as saying that the committee would seek justice department memos which "may contain allegations of criminal wrongdoing by the president".

Capital gang, page 6

The Week

SWISS voters rejected overwhelmingly a referendum proposal to legalise all drug consumption.

THE United States attorney-general, Janet Reno, announced that she will not appoint a special investigator to look into claims that the vice-president, Al Gore, broke political fund-raising laws during the 1996 election campaign.

BRITAIN'S attempt to silence former special forces and intelligence personnel suffered another a blow when a New Zealand court dismissed its attempt to prevent Mike Coburn, a former member of an SAS team that operated behind enemy lines during the Gulf war, from speaking about his exploits in a TV interview.

THE trial of 10 policemen accused of murdering 21 residents of a Rio shantytown ended in disappointment for human rights observers when all the defendants were acquitted.

THE Aids epidemic is out of control in many parts of the world, wiping out gains in the quality of life, infecting 11 men, women and children every minute and killing 2.5 million people last year, a United Nations report said.

Le Monde, page 17

THE UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, said in Paris that African leaders involved in the war in Congo had agreed to stop fighting, although no accord had been signed to end a conflict that has raised fears of all-out war in central Africa.

EMILIO Massera, a former Argentine admiral who as a member of the military junta that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983 oversaw the "disappearance" of some 20,000 people, has been imprisoned by a Buenos Aires judge.

MARTIN Gurule, a double killer in a jail near Huntsville, was on the run after becoming the first person to escape from death row in Texas since 1934, when Bonnie and Clyde sprung a member of their gang.

A DOZEN bishops in Guadalajara have signed a document excommunicating people involved in kidnapping in Mexico, where up to 70 per cent of abductions are believed to be carried out with police connivance.

MARILYN Monroe topped Playboy magazine's list of the century's 100 sexiest women as selected by readers. She was followed by Jayne Mansfield and Raquel Welch.

EFIM Geller, the Ukrainian-born chess grandmaster, has died at the age of 73.

Turkey's military warns politicians

Chris Morris in Ankara

TURKEY'S military command warned the country's squabbling politicians this week not to make statements that could draw the armed forces into politics.

Turkey is looking for a new government after the minority coalition collapsed last week under the weight of corruption allegations.

A brief statement issued by the general staff said politicians must act with great care during the negotiations to form a new government and "avoid saying anything which could get the armed forces involved in politics".

Although it launched three coups between 1960 and 1980, the military now prefers to work behind the scenes. On the rare occasions that it makes public pronouncements people take notice.

This one is a reminder of the real source of much of Turkey's political power. It implied that the military does not favour any particular political party, an apparent reference to comments attributed to the leader of the Islamist Virtue party, Recai Kutan, who suggested that the military would not stand in the way of a government formed by his party.

Virtue is the largest party in parliament and, according to convention, Mr Kutan should be given the first chance to take the reins of power. It is common knowledge, however, that the military high command distrusts the Islamist movement. It takes extremely seriously its role as the guardian of Turkey's strict secular system.

The problem facing the military is that Virtue could do well if an election is held next year. Most political parties favour early elections, and parliament has set a date in April, but the military is thought to favour postponing elections until 2000.

It is frustrated by the inability of Turkey's secular parties, who won more than three-quarters of the vote at the last election, to form an effective government. A delayed vote could allow time for reform of the electoral system, in an attempt to create a clearer secular majority in parliament.

There has been intense speculation about the possible composition of a new government. One option is for the two main centre-right parties, led by the outgoing prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, and the former prime minister, Tansu Ciller, to sink their differences.

An earlier agreement collapsed, and secular party leaders may interpret the military statement as a warning that they should not seek a temporary alliance with Virtue, or offer the Islamists any concessions in order to form a new government.

Military pressure was instrumental in forcing Virtue's predecessor, the Welfare party, out of government last year.

The fall of Welfare, which was subsequently closed down by a court order, became known as a "soft coup". That is why the military's statement that it does not want a political role is disingenuous: it already has one. It is at the centre of many political calculations as negotiations continue on how to form a new government.

The politicised role of the military is one of the issues on which the European Union insists that progress must be made before Turkey can begin EU membership negotiations.

● Italy's defence minister said last week that Italy might solve its current diplomatic dilemma by expelling the detained Kurdish guerrilla leader, Abdullah Ocalan, following Germany's refusal to ask for his extradition to face charges on an eight-year-old arrest warrant.

Mr Ocalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), was arrested last month at Rome's Fiumicino airport after arriving on a flight from Moscow with a false passport. He is wanted in Turkey and has applied for political asylum.



Runway to statehood . . . The new Yasser Arafat International Airport in Gaza, opened last week, is seen as a gateway to the Palestinian territories. This week the United States pledged $900 million in aid to the Palestinians to encourage them to stick to the peace process with Israel PHOTOGRAPH: ADEL HANA

France and Germany seek to bind their fraying ties

Ian Traynor in Berlin

AFTER days of controversy and confusion about the new German government's European policies, President Jacques Chirac of France went to Potsdam on Monday for the first Franco-German summit with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

The crucial talks were intended to forge a common position before this month's European Union summit in Vienna. They are aimed at defining Mr Schröder's agenda for Europe in the first half of next year and at re-energising the Franco-German relationship, which has flagged badly in the past three years.

Paris and Bonn are at loggerheads over a number of issues, including reform of the EU budget and farming subsidies. Agreement on these issues is essential if the EU is to expand into eastern Europe.

Mr Schröder has also been trying to open up the Franco-German marriage to include Britain in a *ménage à trois*. Tony Blair has also tried to increase the network of contacts with the German government.

But Franco-German plans to "harmonise" taxes on business throughout the EU after the single currency is launched next month have triggered the worst row between Britain and the Continent since Mr Blair entered Downing Street last year.

Germany takes over the EU presidency on January 1, the day the euro is launched. Mr Schröder's central project is reform of the EU budget and reducing Bonn's $13 billion net transfer to Brussels. He wants the reforms agreed by March.

Martin Walker, page 6

Tokyo fails to apologise

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

THE leaders of Japan and China struggled last week to convince the world that they have embarked on a new future following criticism that their summit had failed to make significant progress on the key issues of wartime history and Taiwan.

In a joint communiqué, issued after a meeting between the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, and the Japanese prime minister, Keizo Obuchi, Japan expressed "deep remorse" for the "grave suffering and damage" caused by the invasion of China in the 1930s.

But the document stopped short of the apology China had been seeking and was not signed by the two leaders.

Ruling opens old wounds

Continued from page 1

the Pinochet Foundation, wiping away tears and angrily vowing to bring their hero home. Pinochet's son Augusto told them: "Today there is no doubt that a sectarian political group has triumphed, but this is just one battle and not the war."

The supporters milled about wearing badges that said "Thank you General Pinochet". They held portraits of the grey-haired general which bore one word, "immortal".

"I find the ruling unfair," said Andrea Etcheverry, a businesswoman. "I regret the deaths that occurred early in the Pinochet government but he also brought well-being, peace and progress to the nation."

Behind the scenes the United States is quietly putting pressure on Britain to allow Gen Pinochet to return to Chile. The US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, has raised the issue twice in recent weeks with the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, according to Foreign Office sources.

Washington has kept a low profile since Gen Pinochet's arrest and maintained publicly that it is a legal issue, but in private the US has expressed concern that the affair is destabilising democracy in Chile. US involvement has added to the Government's dilemma.

Most experts believe the law lords' ruling that the former dictator does not have immunity from prosecution leaves Mr Straw with little room for manoeuvre. Theoretically, the Home Secretary can only let him go home on humanitarian grounds.

Although he is aged 83 and recently had an operation on his back, Gen Pinochet is not thought to be unwell. Indeed Grovelands Priory hospital in Southgate, north London, asked him to leave on Monday. The psychiatrist, Geoffrey Lloyd, concluded that the general was not suffering from any psychological problems. "He could have left weeks ago," said a source. He is expected to move to Virginia Water, Surrey.

Washington's concern cannot be easily dismissed. The US is sensitive to the furore because it sees Latin America as its own backyard, and because of lingering embarrassment over the alleged role of the CIA in the fall of President Salvador Allende.

In television interviews last Sunday, Mr Insulza pressed Britain to accept a deal to let Gen Pinochet go. He said the former dictator might be forced to disclose details of what had happened during the coup and its aftermath if he went back to Chile. "The only real chance to have some kind of justice and some kind of truth is in Chile, where the events happened," Chile's foreign minister said.

Chile does not want Gen Pinochet to face what it regards as a "show trial" in Spain, where he would not be jailed even if he were convicted. Nobody over the age of 75 is imprisoned in Spain.

However, Chile's intentions are viewed with scepticism. A letter from the all-party Parliamentary Human Rights Group to Mr Straw urges him to resist the Chilean calls. The group, the vast majority of its 150 members Labour MPs, hints at a strong Labour rebellion if Gen Pinochet is sent back.

Nowhere to hide

Continued from page 1

over a system that "tortured victims on a vast scale" and his extradition on the grounds of ordering and procuring this did not attract immunity of any kind.

Here was a singularly unflinching statement from the judicial majority. It was bold and principled, taking a stand on behalf of the globalisation of fundamental human rights which will be seen as a milestone.

If and when Pinochet stands before a Spanish court, he will make his own defence on the substance of the charges, including, no doubt, a reiterated claim in this new jurisdiction to sovereign immunity. But the law lords place the weight of the highest domestic court against the proposition that Britain is a safe haven for old dictators whom their own country has found reason to excuse for crimes against humanity. It is a moment to make one feel prouder of the judges who concluded it than the politicians whose easy negligence caused it to happen in the first place.

Carried logically down the path, the doctrine thus enshrined may be inconvenient. It has already provoked charges of inconsistency and double standards — if Pinochet, why not South Africa's De Klerk? Nobody is contesting the immunity of serving leaders, which makes Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat and Jiang Zemin safe enough.

But if old torturers aren't free to walk abroad, once their day is done, what inducement will they have to step down from office, and make the kind of democratic compromise that Pinochet himself was prevailed upon to countenance in 1990?

The answer is simple. That kind of compact is made within the borders of the state. What the British judges have said is that the amnesty Chile granted must not be allowed to poison and override the sanctity of international law in respect of the highest crimes.

They declare for the supremacy of international human rights. Spain suggests that if a prima facie state torturer ventures outside his own jurisdiction, he makes himself available for justice. The law lords agree.

It will be a singular day of doom if Mr Straw contrives a way of saying that Pinochet, nevertheless, remains above the law.

Mugabe shops while Zimbabwe burns

Andrew Meldrum in Harare

PRESIDENT Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, facing mounting political and social unrest at home, has spent the past fortnight on foreign tour, ending this week with a shopping expedition to London.

When he left on November 21 many Zimbabweans were shocked that he should take such a lengthy absence while the country was embroiled in several crises, including the row about his confiscation of 841 white-owned farms, the increasingly bitter labour unrest, grave economic troubles and Zimbabwe's controversial involvement in the Congo war.

But the 74-year-old president and his young wife Grace did not see fit to curtail their now customary Christmas tour of London shops. He broke his holiday last weekend only long enough to issue an edict banning trade union strikes and threatening stern action against union leaders. He used his sweeping presidential powers to restrict the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which staged two successful strikes against government policies last month.

The increasingly assertive ZCTU and its secretary-general, Morgan Tsvangirai, are widely seen as Mr Mugabe's strongest opposition. The unions will challenge the strike ban in court. Some lawyers say it is unconstitutional and shows how desperate the government really is. "President Mugabe has now admitted that his government is no longer a popular one," the director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Mike Auret, said.

Mr Mugabe's overseas trip began with a flight to Libya, breaching the United Nations ban on direct air connections with that country. It is understood that he asked the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gadafy, for financial support.

In Cairo he visited arms manufacturers to inspect weapons for possible use in the Congo war and to quell domestic riots. He also visited arms manufacturers in Italy.

He then attended the Franco-African summit in Paris. But the vaunted "breakthrough" in negotiations to end the Congo war has been greeted with much scepticism in Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad are not expected to stop fighting the Congolese rebels and their backers, Uganda and Rwanda.

Mugabe's acquisition orders on 841 white-owned farms go against the policy agreed with Zimbabwe's main aid donors: Britain, the European Union, the United States, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

His government assured them at a conference in Harare last September that its action on land would not disrupt food production or increase Zimbabwe's crushing budget deficit, would be done only in consultation with all stakeholders, and would be in accordance with the constitution, which protects private property.

The government is trying to find an explanation for its land grab that will satisfy the IMF, which is withholding $53 million the government badly needs to prop up the sinking Zimbabwe dollar, now worth almost 100 to the dollar and expected to drop further if the IMF funds are not released soon.

● Botswana police said last week that they were launching a manhunt for Canaan Banana, Zimbabwe's former president, who fled to Botswana after a court in Harare found him guilty of sodomy.

Beijing aims to curb army entrepreneurs

John Gittings in Hong Kong

CHINA has made a fresh attempt to strip its armed forces of the huge range of businesses — from coal mines to karaoke bars — they have acquired in recent years.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been ordered to turn over its multi-billion dollar enterprises to civilian authorities. Experts say it owns more than 15,000 enterprises, generating an income which is at least 10 per cent of the official military budget.

But a speech by the premier, Zhu Rongji, urging the government and party to lend more visible support to the army, suggests there is considerable military resistance to the reorganisation.

Mr Zhu was addressing a conference of top military and party leaders, called last week to discuss making the armed forces feel more wanted. Mr Zhu, who in the past has criticised corrupt practices in the army, went out of his way to praise "the strong pillar of our country and courageous guard of the people's interests".

The PLA is having to cope with a three-year plan announced last year to reduce its total strength by 500,000, to 2.5 million.

President Jiang Zemin first urged the army to give up its business empire in July. The subject was dropped when soldiers up and down the country became heroes for fighting summer floods.

In October a national office was set up to deal with the business handover, under Mr Zhu's direct control. But the latest call last month warned PLA units not to cheat or conceal ownership.

The problem is not so much the loss of income — many businesses may be losing money. But the enterprises provide employment for army dependants and cheap access to raw materials and manufactured products.

Ownership of larger companies will be transferred to the central State Economic and Trade Commission, but smaller enterprises will be re-assigned locally. Monitoring the process has been entrusted to local police forces — although they are often closely connected with the military establishment.

The most likely result is that legal title may be transferred but existing patterns of employment will be maintained to the army's advantage.

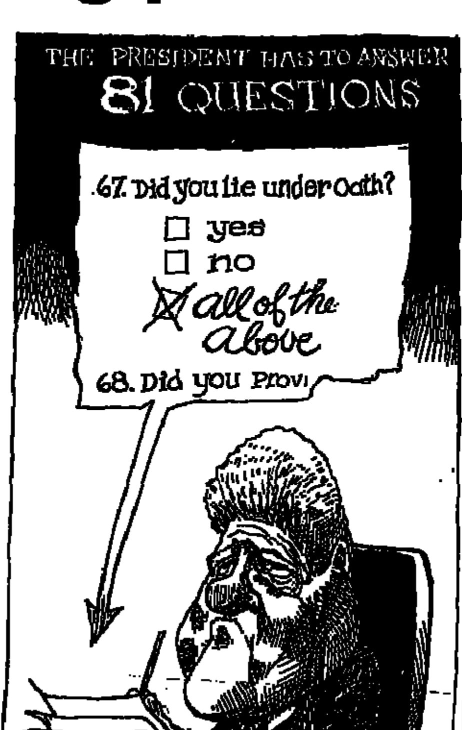
Capital gang pursues its own agenda

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

THESE are serious times, even if an amusement-besotted era reflexively pretends otherwise. Here's why. Some time this month — and perhaps as soon as next week — the Republican majority on the House of Representatives judiciary committee will adopt one or more articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, thus beginning only the third attempt to reverse a presidential election result in United States history.

Although an unmistakable element of political flippancy has partly characterised this entire saga, it must be clearly asserted that, by any objective test, this is now a moment of the highest constitutional importance. Most people in America look on with amazement and impatience. Outside the US it is viewed with something much closer to disgust, or even alarm.

In his opinionated but generally [illegible] Carthyism, the Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz gets it spot on. Impeachment and removal of the president, he writes, is the most extraordinary remedy known to the American system of government. "Improperly employed," Dershowitz writes, "it is a legislative *coup d'état*."



Dershowitz pulls no punches. He is far from uncritical of Clinton, and he is downright scathing about the president's lawyers, but he leaves little doubt that he believes that the attempted impeachment of the president is deeply improper employment — and no less improper for its probable eventual failure. He calls the judiciary committee's efforts tawdry work, and he concludes:

"It would not be in the long-term interests of our nation's stability for President Clinton to be forced out of office by the Starr report. A resignation by Clinton would legitimate [independent counsel Kenneth] Starr's sexual McCarthyism and encourage future efforts to overthrow presidencies by investigating into the lives of our presidents."

As the opinion polls show, most Americans agree. But here's a strange and, to my mind, disquieting thing: the one place that the impeachment move will not be viewed with either horror or amazement is the city of Washington DC.

Correction. It will not be viewed with horror or amazement within the largely white part of the city which regards itself as the republic's political establishment — the part which sees itself, to borrow the title from one of the innumerable Washington television pundit shows, as the Capital Gang. For this capital gang wants to get Clinton out.

The phrase "Clinton-haters" conjures up different images for different people. Reclusive rightwing millionaires, perhaps. Bible-thumping fundamentalists. Gun-fixated anti-government obsessives. Web-surfing conspiracy theorists. Or maybe just plain old Republican politicians who cannot abide that Ronald Reagan is no longer in the White House and that Bill — and Hillary — Clinton are.

The image that the words "Clinton-hater" may not so readily conjure up is that of the Washington establishment. For surely these learned, cosmopolitan, policy-oriented folk are the epitome of constitutional balance, as well as instinctive admirers of the flawed but charming and brainy president who combines a mastery of detail with a sense of history?

Not so, according to a truly extraordinary article entitled "Not In Their Back Yard", which appeared in the Washington Post's Style section on November 2. The article by Sally Quinn, who is married to the Post's celebrated former editor Ben Bradlee, is a cry of pain on behalf of a spurned culture.

It begins with a depiction of an (apparently) typical "*le tout* Washington" occasion attended by Democratic politicians such as Madeleine Albright and Donna Shelala, Senator John McCain of Arizona and the new House Speaker Bob Livingston from the Republican side, the Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, and journalistic luminaries such as Maureen Dowd, Jim Lehrer, William Safire and Judy Woodruff — "all behaving like the pals that they are".

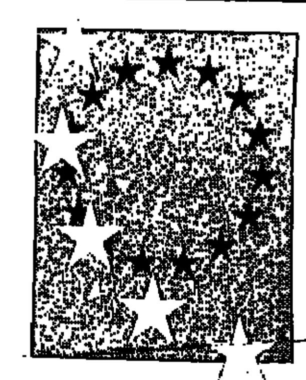
These people, Quinn wrote, are an American community, "not unlike any other small community in the country". Where other communities grow corn or make cars, this one does power and influence. "They call the capital city their 'town'," Quinn rhapsodised. "And their town has been turned upside down." By Bill Clinton.

That the Post considered Quinn's article important is attested by the fact that it was personally subedited for publication by the paper's editor, Leonard Downie. It was very obviously intended as A Major Statement. Unfortunately for Quinn, however, it was the wrong statement at the wrong time. With exquisitely ill-judged timing, the article appeared on November 2. The following day, the American electorate confounded the Washington insiders yet again by rallying against the impeachers in the mid-term elections.

The night before Quinn's article appeared, the experts on the Capital Gang had been at it again. A five-seat gain for the Republicans in the Senate, predicted one columnist. Republicans to oust Barbara Boxer in California, said another. And to defeat Russ Feingold in Wisconsin, added a third. Republicans to win the Maryland governorship, pontificated a fourth.

Every prediction was wrong. Every judgment was mistaken. The following week, of course, there was not a word of apology, nor a hint of resignation. Needless to say, no one suggested impeachment, not for one of their own. But then that's the way it is with Washington's discredited capital gang of Clinton haters. Improperly employed, indeed.

Strains start to show in Germany's coalition



Europe this week
Martin Walker

THE honeymoon of the new German government did not last long in the German press. That was to be expected. But it did not last long among the joyous new partners of the Social Democrats and the Greens, which is more troubling. Nor, worst of all, did it last long among the various Social Democrat factions and personalities.

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called his first cabinet meeting in Berlin last week, and his government promptly fell into public disarray. This has left Britain and its European and Nato partners baffled over the real policies of the biggest country and dominant economy of Europe.

It began with Joschka Fischer, supposedly the leader of the sensible wing of the Green party, who is the new foreign minister. It was time for Nato, he began, to renounce any first use of nuclear weapons.

This was in his election manifesto, and Social Democrats have long supported the idea. Although the cold war is over, the Americans were predictably upset, and Germany's new defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, who was paying his first visit to the Pentagon at the time, had to denounce the views of his colleague, the foreign minister.

Then Fischer gave an interview to the left-leaning newspaper, Frankfurter Rundschau, in which he called for Europe to follow the grand transfer of sovereignty that would attend the launch of the single currency with a genuine European Union — a single state with a single constitution, a single foreign policy and a single army.

Chancellor Schröder was in Brussels the day the interview was published, and pointedly dismissed the Utopian Euro-federalist rhetoric of his foreign minister by saying that "things are more difficult now — it is harder to approach this vision of Europe's integration . . . I have to think about the German interest".

Europe's central bankers and its finance ministers were also at a loss to determine what Germany's policy would be for co-ordinating economic and taxation policies after the launch of the euro in January. Oskar Lafontaine, the powerful leftwing finance minister, said last month that he was determined to establish a harmonised system of corporate taxes by June next year, when Germany completes its turn at the EU presidency.

Lafontaine, who sometimes acts as if he were really running the German government, has been the most vocal, the most leftwing and the most Keynesian figure among Europe's new centre-left leaders. He has challenged the independence of the central banks, called for lower interest rates and deficit spending to reduce unemployment, and has also suggested a return to semi-fixed exchange rates. He sounds like a refreshing return to the rhetoric of the 1970s, before the era of Reagan-Thatcher monetarism. But banks and markets fret about this sort of talk, and so does Britain's New Labour government.

Britain's European strategy of forging a special relationship with the new Social Democratic government of Germany is foundering after a series of rows between the UK chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown, and the powerful Lafontaine. Britain blames it all on the split between the "Old Labour" Lafontaine and the "New Labour" Chancellor Schröder, who fought his successful election as "Herr Blair". German sources, by contrast, blame divisions between Downing Street and the Treasury, with the Foreign Office squeezed out of the game.

The row has angered No 10, which winces every time Brown threatens a British veto — as he did repeatedly last week — on EU plans for co-ordinating taxes across Europe.

"Every time Britain uses that word 'veto', we are reminded of Madame Thatcher or Monsieur Major, and we had hoped that Britain under New Labour was beyond that", one well-placed French official commented privately. "This puts at risk all the credibility Blair has established in Europe."

The trouble began on November 19, when Lafontaine met Brown in London to discuss a series of tripartite committees of senior German, British and French officials, to agree the next phase of European policies on budgets, taxes and jobs. This was to be the fulfilment of German proposals to transform the traditional France-Germany axis in Europe into a triangle that would include Britain.

Instead, Lafontaine found himself pre-empted by a Brown proposal for purely Anglo-German consultations, combined with what German officials call "a petulant British complaint" about Lafontaine's enthusiasm for harmonising taxes across Europe. Lafontaine was so non-plussed that he telephoned Bonn to find out what was going on.

The row resumed three days later in Brussels, at a dinner of Europe's socialist and social democrat finance ministers, when Brown insisted on blocking the report of their economic policy working group, which included proposals for harmonising the tax system, because it was "unacceptable". Ed Balls, Brown's chief policy aide, demanded that it be neither "tabled nor published". Brown then started threatening to use the British veto.

The French, understandably, find all this jolly amusing: the British are bumbling their way about Europe again. But the stage is now set for a stormy changing of the guard on January 1, when the euro is launched and Germany takes the helm of the EU Council. Schröder is determined, like Mrs Thatcher 20 years ago, to get his country's money back from Europe. "The unfairness of the position of Germany as the big net payer of the EU budget will have to be changed," he said in Brussels.

Germany has acted for 30 years as Europe's bankroller of last resort, solving every EU row with money, to the point where it now pays for 30 per cent of Europe's budget yet gets back only 15 percent of EU spending. The issue can no longer be put off, Schröder added, because the accession negotiations have begun with the eastern Europeans and until the budget is settled "the process of EU enlargement cannot be advanced".

France feels pangs of guilt over deaths of homeless

Jon Henley in Paris

FRANCE was forced to delve deep into its social conscience last week after 10 homeless people died of hypothermia, one of them outside the doors of a hospital, in a cold snap in which temperatures in central Paris plummeted to minus 6C.

As the death toll rose, the French president Jacques Chirac demanded that "in this crucial period, everyone should feel personally concerned. The simple gesture of pointing out a person in danger could save a life."

His employment and solidarity minister, Martine Aubry, exhorted every French man and woman to open their eyes to the suffering of the homeless.

According to official estimates, France has some 500,000 people who are either homeless or without a fixed address, even though it has one of the best-funded welfare systems in western Europe.

The number of emergency hostel beds totals 15,000 — more than double the figure of 10 years ago, and almost enough, say social workers, to deal with demand. But not quite.

"It is a scandal that in 1998, men and women are still living and dying in the street," said one charity worker. "It is not because the weather is freezing now that we denounce it. It is neither a new scandal nor even an intermittent one. It is, dramatically and unacceptably, a daily scandal."

Earlier this year, the national assembly passed an anti-poverty bill aimed at delivering on President Chirac's 1995 campaign promise to heal what he called then the "immense social fracture" between rich and poor in France.

"We want to give those who are being left on the roadside the means of taking their fate into their own hands . . . rather than to hand out cheques that merely allow them to survive," Ms Aubry said of the bill.

An estimated 10 per cent of France's 60 million people currently live below the poverty line. More than 3 million are unemployed, some 6 million receive welfare handouts and 2 million are poorly housed. Fully one quarter of French people say they have renounced some kind of medical care because of the expense.


France's welfare state has not saved the homeless

At an estimated cost of $800 million, the legislation calls for the creation of 300,000 minimum-wage jobs over five years, the construction of 100,000 subsidised housing units, the requisitioning of empty apartments to house the homeless, and better access to health care for the needy. But even the law's most fervent supporters admit it will take years before its effects are felt.

For the volunteers manning the emergency hostels in Paris, the main problem appeared to be that those most in need did not know what they were entitled to. "There are enough beds now," said Patrick Hervé, manager of a 380-bed hostel. "No one should be freezing to death on the street. But so many don't know where to go."

With the temperature back above zero later in the week, Stephane, a 37-year-old vagrant begging outside Concorde metro station, agreed that beds were not the issue. "Sure, you can find one," he said. "But the decent hostels are full by three or four in the afternoon, and you have to trail all round the city looking for a mattress. That's our life — we trail around for food, for a bed, for our laundry. It's not surprising, when it gets to midnight and it's minus 6, that some people just give up."

● The Washington Post reported last week that the average French citizen gives just 0.15 per cent of his gross income to charity, compared with twice that amount in Germany, and eight times that in the United States, where the average donation is a heart-warming 1.2 per cent of gross income. Part of the problem is the French tax system, which limits deductions to just 6 per cent of income (the figure is 50 per cent in the US).

Milosevic wields knife after wife orders political purge

Chris Bird in Belgrade

SHE looks like a pleasant, slightly chubby housewife. But Mirjana Markovic, wife of Yugoslavia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, is the driving force behind a political crackdown in Serbia on the press, Belgrade university and Mr Milosevic's most powerful lieutenants.

The latest scalp is that of Momcilo Perisic, until last week head of the armed forces. He has been demoted to adviser to the federal prime minister — a post he has refused, according to the Belgrade media.

The fortunes of General Perisic, regarded as a moderate force in Serbian politics, follow those of Mr Milosevic's spy chief Jovica Stanisic, who was sacked in October. Until then he had been seen as the most powerful man in Serbia after Mr Milosevic.

The respected VIP newsletter in Belgrade pointed the finger at Mrs Markovic, or "Mira" as she is known to Serbs, for General Perisic's removal.

Mrs Markovic, a Marxist academic, is the leader of the JUL party. It enjoys influence far out of proportion to the seats it commands in the Serbian parliament.

"Mira is being allowed to wreak vengeance," said a Western diplomat familiar with the Yugoslav first lady's growing influence.

An independent Serb editor in Belgrade commented: "The situation is like a court: you have a king and queen, and if you are close to the family you have influence. But Milosevic is tired of all this — he likes to meet the few foreign dignatories who will see him, but he is now a misanthrope. It is she [Markovic] who is now very important in who is appointed."

Mrs Markovic crossed swords with Mr Stanisic and General Perisic during the huge student protests in 1996. Both publicly ruled out using force to clear the streets, a policy advocated by Mrs Markovic.

More recently, Mr Stanisic and General Perisic reportedly cautioned against the crackdown in Kosovo which forced nearly 300,000 ethnic Albanians to flee their homes.

Mrs Markovic's vengeance, however, is directed most strongly at Belgrade's dwindling number of independent newspapers and radio stations, and a small group of university professors in the city who have refused to sign contracts that amount to a declaration of loyalty.

With Mr Milosevic looking more like a Cheshire Cat by the day — smiling but never giving any hint of what he thinks — Ms Markovic's pronouncements, mostly in a bi-weekly column in the women's magazine Bazar, are seized on by analysts desperate to know what Mr Milosevic will do next. In a June issue she spelled out the imminent crackdown, accusing the independent media of treason in criticising the government's policy in Kosovo.

The Danas and Dnevni Telegraf newspapers and Radio Index station were closed down in October under a new media law that restricts reporting that threatens Yugoslavia's territorial integrity — in effect, any embarrassing news of reverses in Kosovo.

Slobodan Samardzic, a political analyst in Belgrade, has compared 56-year-old Mrs Markovic to Elena Ceausescu, wife of the late Romanian dictator. She too has academic pretensions, a playboy son and a ruthless determination to keep her husband in power.

But for many years the Belgrade intelligentsia have quietly laughed at Mrs Markovic's columns and growing number of book titles.

Vladeta Jankovic, a professor of comparative linguistics at Belgrade university, who was sacked last week for refusing to sign a government contract, describes Mrs Markovic as "an unrecognised academic who is frustrated and has never been taken seriously, and who bears a grudge, personally and politically".

Despite a new law aimed at keeping politics out of the classroom, she recently established student branches of JUL in universities across the country.

Washington Post, page 13

Superstores cornering market for foodstuffs

David Brindle

SUPERMARKETS have cornered the market for almost all foodstuffs, and are grabbing a growing share of sales of household goods and petrol, according to the annual survey, Family Spending.

But the corner shop is holding its own in respect of tobacco and newspapers, and people still rely on the high street for electrical goods and cosmetics, the survey shows.

The figures, in the annual government Family Expenditure Survey, are based on 6,400 households. Each kept a diary of spending for two weeks.

The report says household expenditure varies, from £96 a week for the poorest tenth of households to £720 for the richest tenth.

Households in the survey were asked to record where they did their shopping. Overall, people spent 3.5 times as much on food and non-alcoholic drinks at supermarkets as elsewhere. Of all food items recorded, only fresh milk was bought in more quantity from other outlets — including doorstep delivery — than from supermarkets.

The survey found that spending on leisure goods and services will soon outstrip spending on food in people's household budgets, signalling a historic shift in domestic priorities.

Of average household expenditure of £328.80 a week, £55.90 now goes on food and non-alcoholic drink, but £55.10 goes on leisure goods and services. Housing costs £51.50 and motoring £46.60.

Leisure spending includes such items as foreign holidays (£9.10 a week), television, videos, computers and CD players (£6.50), and gambling (£4.20), including National Lottery tickets.

The report carries an analysis of changes in household expenditure since 1960, showing that the share devoted to food has fallen, from 31 per cent then to 17 per cent today.

The analysis shows that spending on tobacco has plunged, from 6 per cent of average household budgets to just 2 per cent. However, a breakdown of the trend by income group shows that the fall has been almost exclusively among the better-off.

In what Denis Down, the report's editor, called the "most remarkable" finding of the study, spending on cigarettes by the poorest fifth of households is shown to have stayed constant in real terms since 1968 — suggesting that health campaigns have yet to penetrate all tiers of society.

The analysis also demonstrates how the National Lottery has increased gambling. In 1994/95, average lottery spending was 90p a household; now it is £2.80. The proportion of households playing lotteries has risen to more than 70 per cent, compared with 55 per cent in 1994/95.

● Supermarkets were put under pressure to explain their meat pricing as new evidence suggested they were not bearing their share of the farming crisis.

The Meat and Livestock Commission drew attention to the difference between the price that stores paid to abattoirs and the price they charged the public, which has risen sharply over the past three years.

Checks by the MLC, the industry's promotional and marketing body, provided ammunition for farmers' claims that falling prices for animals had not been passed on to consumers. The information will be passed on to the Office of Fair Trading, which is investigating the claims.

Heroin addict gets life for killing of Irish crime reporter

John Mullin

POLICE in Ireland were celebrating last week after a Dublin drugs dealer was found guilty of the murder two years ago of the investigative journalist, Veronica Guerin. They had mounted the biggest criminal inquiry in Irish history.

The Special Criminal Court in Dublin ruled after an eight-week trial that Paul Ward, aged 34, disposed of the gun and motorcycle used in the shooting.

Because Ward was involved in the plan to shoot Ms Guerin, he was an accessory before the fact. That meant he was guilty of murder. His lawyers indicated he would appeal.

Another alleged gang member is facing trial next year for Ms Guerin's murder. A second is fighting extradition from England, while a third was jailed last year for 12 years on drugs charges. Because of a court order, none can be named.

Three judges, sitting without a jury, said the gang leader ordered the murder of Ms Guerin, aged 36, in June 1996 because her work threatened his multi-million pound empire. It was Ireland's biggest drug smuggling operation, importing 100 tonnes of cannabis a year.

Ms Guerin, whose son, Cathal, was then aged six, was shot as she sat in her car at traffic lights at Clondalkin, on the outskirts of Dublin. Two men wearing helmets pulled up alongside her car on a motorcycle. The pillion passenger pumped six shots into her. She was dead within seconds.

The assassination of Ms Guerin, who worked for the Sunday Independent, outraged the Irish Republic. The government quickly brought in legislation allowing criminals' assets to be seized and signalled restrictions in bail provisions.

Ward was convicted solely on the testimony of Charles Bowden, aged 34, another gang member who turned state's evidence. Bowden, whom the judges called a "self-serving, deeply avaricious and potentially vicious criminal", is serving a six-year sentence imposed last year for drugs and firearms offences.

He is to be given a new identity on his release from Arbour Hill prison in Dublin, where he is in solitary confinement for his own safety.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Lords face busy Christmas

THE Government is planning to force the rebellious House of Lords to sit from Boxing Day onwards unless the peers fall into line and abandon their opposition to the European Parliament Elections Bill and to measures to reform the Upper House itself.

Ending the anachronism that gives voting rights to hereditary aristocrats is a measure that commands widespread support, but the Prime Minister courted controversy by planning to get rid of the hereditaries before saying what he wants to put in their place. That will be decided by a royal commission — a long drawn-out process that lays Mr Blair open to charges that his real aim is to create a House of Cronies.

The Tory majority in the Upper House refuses to co-operate with this plan, or with the European Elections Bill, which will allow the European poll in May to be held on a proportional representation basis. Their lordships object to this "constitutional vandalism" because the electorate would vote for a party only, leaving the MEPs to be drawn from a "closed list" afterwards.

Because the Lords have rejected the legislation five times, the Government is planning to push the measure through again as soon as possible and order the Lords to abandon its three-week Christmas break to give its stamp of approval. Most hereditary Tories, it was calculated, would be reluctant to leave their country houses, leaving Labour and Liberal Democrat peers with a majority in the chamber.

If this fails, there is an emergency plan to create 50 Labour and Liberal Democrat life peers in one day next month, to make absolutely certain that the Government gets its way.

ANOTHER attempt is being made to root out corruption and racism in the Metropolitan Police, where 20 officers or former officers have already been charged and about 50 suspended as part of the investigation.

The strategy will entail "integrity tests" on officers, which involve leaving marked banknotes in police stations. This is in response to allegations by a number of criminals that they have been charged with stealing less than they were in possession of when arrested.

Undercover black officers may also be used to test whether suspect colleagues are racist. Racism and corruption have been identified by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, as the two key issues facing the force.

Fred Broughton, chairman of the Police Federation, said: "Police morale is at its lowest ebb. The setting of traps places every officer under suspicion and exposes them to temptation."

FORMER Allied prisoners of war held in Japan were devastated when, in less than 30 seconds, three judges in Tokyo rejected their claims for compensation. A renewed legal challenge to the Japanese government was immediately lodged, but was thought unlikely to succeed after the court refused to accept that maltreatment had occurred.

The suit for £290 million was filed four years ago by seven plaintiffs on behalf of 20,000 former PoWs and civilian detainees or their widows from Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Under the San Francisco treaty of 1951, survivors receive a settlement of £76.

The judges were not prepared to make a ruling on the harrowing personal testimonies laid before them, saying simply that the plaintiffs as individuals were not entitled to sue the government either under the Hague Convention or under customary international law.

The plaintiffs' leader, Arthur Titherington, aged 76, who survived slave labour in a Taiwan mine, left the court in silence and walked to the Japanese parliament building, where he spat on the floor.

SCOTTISH Nationalists, who add much to the gaiety of politics by producing unpredictable election results, delivered an ominous warning for next year's Scottish Parliament election when they forced Labour into third place in a byelection for a seat in the European Parliament.

The constituency includes two Labour strongholds, Dundee and Aberdeen, and chose Labour to represent it until 1994, when it was seized by the Scottish Nationalists' deputy leader, Allan McCartney.

Although the SNP was predicted to retain the seat, Labour hardly expected to be forced into third place by the Tories and sought to attribute the rout to the low turn-out of 20 per cent.

HARD on the heels of the Pinochet affair, Britain faced a second embarrassing extradition dilemma when the Polish military prosecutor announced that he would apply for the extradition of the wife of an Oxford don for her alleged role in the arrest and execution of a Polish wartime hero.

Helena Brus (née Wolinska), now aged 79, is accused of persecuting opponents of the puppet government in Warsaw, in her role as chief military prosecutor of the hardline post-war communist regime. She is wanted in connection with charges concerning the arrest and prosecution of General Emil Fieldorf, a former deputy of the Polish wartime resistance, who was hanged in 1953.

She fled Poland during a purge against Jews by the communists in 1968. Her husband is emeritus professor of Russian and East European Studies at Wolfson College.

In Brief

EVIDENCE that enriched feeds given to premature babies significantly improve their IQ at the age of eight may prove that the brain's capacity, particularly in terms of verbal skills, could be influenced by nutrition, according to a report in the British Medical Journal.

A DNA test, revealing every genetic disorder, has been developed to prevent chromosomally abnormal embryos from being used during infertility treatment.

MALCOLM GLOVER, the leader of Doncaster's Labour council, has been arrested on allegations of corruption a year after the entire district party was suspended amid similar allegations.

THE Museum of Scotland, which presents for the first time the story of the country and its people, was opened by the Queen in Edinburgh.

THREE British children were left in a taxi outside the British Consulate in Istanbul after their mother abandoned them following a holiday romance.

MOHAMED Al Fayed, the businessman who owns Harrods, won leave to appeal against a court decision which allowed the former Tory MP Neil Hamilton to sue him over charges that Mr Hamilton accepted gifts while he was a minister.

THE common drug Pentosan, made from beechwood shavings, is being considered by the Government to protect those thought to be at risk of developing CJD, the human form of mad cow disease.

EIGHT ITV companies were told they can reduce their annual payments to the Treasury by a total of £90 million if they choose to renew their broadcast licences.

FAMILY doctors who refuse to apologise to patients following rulings by the health service ombudsman could be named in a change of policy.

STEVE BELL has been named Strip Cartoonist of the Year for the third year running in the Cartoon Trust awards for his "If . . ." strip in the Guardian.

THE cost of dismantling and cleaning up the Dounreay nuclear plant in Caithness will be £4.5 billion, about £90 for every person in Britain.

AN EX-LEADER of the RAF's Red Arrows aerobatics team, Raymond Loverseed, was killed alongside Canadian navigator Adam Saunders when their plane plunged into a Devon hillside. There were no passengers.

Role model . . . The actor Stephen Fry at the unveiling of Maggi Hambling's bronze and granite memorial to Oscar Wilde in London. It shows the writer and wit popping up out of his coffin, cigarette in hand. Silver letters at his toes read: 'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars' PHOTO HAMZA MOULD

Teachers move up a class

David Brindle

TEACHERS, librarians and bank managers are up, but cooks, shop assistants and bricklayers are down in the most fundamental reclassification of British society for almost 90 years.

About a fifth of the working population will be shunted into a different slot on the social spectrum as a result of the official changes, announced this week by the Office for National Statistics. Many of those moving up the scale are public-sector workers, and women.

Social workers, archivists and environmental health officers are among those who may be surprised to find themselves ranked alongside judges, architects and dentists as "higher professionals".

Plasterers, welders and hairdressers are among qualified tradespeople who may be equally surprised to find themselves grouped in "semi-routine occupations" along with care assistants, security guards and bus conductors.

One key factor in the changes is that no account has been taken of relative earnings. Instead, occupations have been sorted on the basis of form of remuneration — ranging from secure, salaried employment to short-term piecework — and promotion opportunities and autonomy. Classification has also been expanded to create a distinct grouping for the bulk of self-employed people and small employers, as well as an optional category for those who have never had paid employment and the long-term unemployed.

The overhaul of the official social ratings has come about as a consequence of the decline of manufacturing, the growth in employment of women, and the emergence of service industries such as call centres — a sector that now employs 1 per cent of the working population.

The new system, which will come into use in 2001 and will be applied to that year's census, retains the occupational basis adopted in 1911. This is the foundation of the current six classifications of professional, managerial and technical, skilled (manual and non-manual), partly skilled, and unskilled.

Changes accepted by the Government are based on proposals by the Economic and Social Research Council, creating seven social groups arranged by present or former occupation, plus the optional eighth for non-workers.

Applying the new system retrospectively, the proportion of the workforce in the "higher managerial and professional" group is shown to have risen from 9 per cent in 1984 to 22 per cent last year. Among women workers, the equivalent rise was from 4 per cent to 18 per cent.

At the other end of the range, more than twice as many women (11 per cent of the female workforce) now fall into the "routine occupations" class as do men (5 per cent).

David Rose, professor of sociology at Essex university and leader of the review, said: "When people think of the working class, the traditional worker is the coal miner. [But] there are hardly any of those left. What they should be thinking about is the cleaner."

Asked what he considered to be the current balance of society, he said: "If you want to use these terms, which I think are terribly, terribly crude. You could say that roughly half is middle class and roughly half working class."

Tatchell calls on Gandhi in court case

PETER TATCHELL, the gay rights campaigner, on Monday summoned up the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, the suffragettes and anti-apartheid activists to fight a prosecution which could lead to him serving a two-month prison sentence for interrupting the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter sermon, *writes Will Woodward.*

Mr Tatchell is being prosecuted under the rarely used Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act of 1860. Section II of the act states "any person who shall be guilty of riotous, violent or indecent behaviour in any cathedral church . . . shall be liable to penalty". Mr Tatchell could also be fined £200.

Canterbury magistrates court was told that on April 12 Mr Tatchell climbed into Dr George Carey's pulpit as the archbishop delivered his Easter Sunday sermon in Canterbury Cathedral. Mr Tatchell, joined by six other members of the lesbian and gay protest group OutRage! condemned the archbishop's opposition to an equal age of consent and his refusal to support gay fostering.

In his defence, the gay rights campaigner insisted he had not intended to offend people with his "very fair and reasoned" protest.

"I think a lot of people would have been very offended by realising that Dr Carey supported discrimination against gay people . . . I think people's human rights are more important than the maintenance of church service and ritual," he said.

During his pulpit protest he had not abused Dr Carey or insulted the Church, and had not touched the archbishop.

The constitution of OutRage!, Mr Tatchell said, committed members to non-violent direct action. The movement modelled its methods on "Mahatma Gandhi in the struggle for Indian independence, the methods used by the suffragettes, [and] the black civil rights movement in America. Those methods are our inspiration and model."

The trial continues.

Comment, page 12

Diplomats take new posts

Ian Black

IN THE biggest expansion of British overseas representation in years, the Foreign Office is to recruit 200 more diplomats to fly the flag on palm-fringed islands and fight cut-throat competition in expanding Asian markets.

New mini-embassies are to open in St Kitts in the Caribbean and Kiribati in the Pacific, while tiny posts in the oil-rich Caspian basin are to be beefed up, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, announced last week.

Our chaps will also be setting up shop in Francophone Guinea, Mali and Gabon in West Africa — after the Sierra Leone arms scandal underlined the need for a presence on the ground.

Advertising a global reach and a modernising agenda that embraces image-burnishing, efficiency and faster communication, as well as his famous "ethical dimension" to foreign policy, Mr Cook said he was opening eight posts and closing five.

Thirty more diplomats will be sent to European Union countries and 21 to former communist countries. New consulates in the industrial cities of Chongqing in China and Fukuoka in Japan are to battle for exports in a competitive market. Commercial work is also being boosted in India and Sweden. Total staff is to increase by 375.

Foreign Office savings of £100 million have been identified from sale of redundant overseas property, including the ambassador's residence in Dublin, the Bonn embassy — moving to Berlin — and the old consulate in Casablanca.

The cash will be ploughed back into the diplomatic service. To Labour cheers, he said that for the first time in two parliaments he was announcing "an expansion, not a retrenchment" in Britain's overseas representation.

Posts being closed are in Chiang-mai, Thailand; Cleveland, Ohio; Kuching, Malaysia; Pusan, South Korea; and Seville, Spain.

Preachers' winning talk

Rory Carroll

JOKES about sex, hot dog metaphors, pop lyrics, ankle flashing and a sunburned penguin — the Churches' élite stormtroopers vied last week to get back in touch with society.

Booming annunciations of the Lord's Good News clinched first and second place in the preacher of the year award. The coachloads of supporters who descended on Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, never flagged during the two-hour "celebration" of faith and prayer.

"It's our Miss World," said one woman, aware that all six finalists, chosen from 250 entries, were men.

Skull caps amid the snowy heads and shiny pates reflected that the competition was open to Jewish entries.

Shmuley Boteach, author of Kosher Sex, was runner-up but the day — and the £1,000 cash prize and statue — belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist Ian Sweeney.

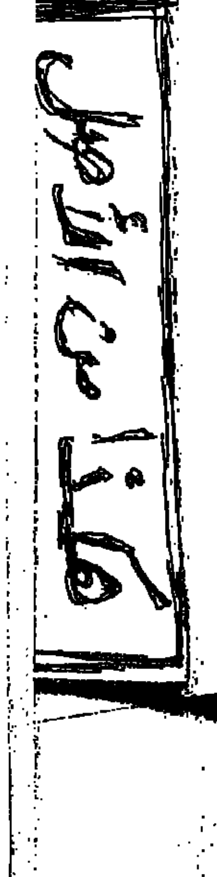
Mr Sweeney, the son of Antiguan parents, blasted his way to victory. His text frequently leaped into capitals. Flashing bare ankles, he expounded on receiving socks.

"With joyful anticipation crushed by the reality of this boring gift, we are then counselled with the words, 'Never mind, it's the thought that counts!' So: it's the thought that counts, is it?"

No, apparently. Thought without action is meaningless, he shouted. The congregation nodded. "Amen."

Mr Sweeney, aged 34, was gracious in victory. "I do not see myself as a winner, it's just a privilege. It's no triumph and I do not feel any better than anyone else. I just hope this competition helps to highlight the sterling work carried out week in week out by preachers all over the country."

The judges' criteria were clarity, attentiveness, voice, balance between theology and application, biblical values, a sense of God and the congregation's response.



Blair woos and wins over Irish

John Mullin

WITH the tricolour of green, white and gold at his shoulder, Tony Blair shamelessly wooed Irish parliamentarians last week with tales of his Celtic roots. He even tried a little Gaelic, and they were enraptured.

Nelson Mandela, John F Kennedy and Bill Clinton had been there before him, but Mr Blair, after a quick bite of the lip, became the first British prime minister to address the Oireachtas, both Houses of Parliament, in Dublin. It was, as Speaker Seamus Pattison said, a significant step forward in the maturing relationship between Britain and Ireland.

Mr Blair told members of the Dail and Seanad that Ireland was in his blood. His grandmother ran a hardware shop in Ballyshannon, County Donegal. His mother, Hazel, was born there, leaving for a new life in Glasgow after the death of her father while she was a child.

He reminisced about childhood holidays spent at the four-star Sands House hotel in Rossnowlagh every summer from 1958 to 1966.

Members of the Dail and Seanad pronounced his speech a stunning success, a cunning mixture of sentimentality and aspirations for a new beginning. It was a triumph of occasion over substance.

Mr Blair admitted that the peace process was at a difficult juncture but believed progress was being made. There were impasses on the forming of the shadow executive and on IRA decommissioning, but "let us not underestimate how far we have come, and let us agree that we have come too far to go back now".

Mr Blair had a message for Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president, who attended the occasion. It was time for paramilitary decommissioning to begin. "I am not asking anyone to surrender. I am asking everyone to declare the victory of peace," he said.

"Just as we must understand your yearning for a united Ireland, so too must you understand what the best of unionism is about. They are good and decent people, just like you."

Finally, he observed that Northern Ireland, which had divided the two countries for so long, was now pulling them closer together. His audience rose to give him an ovation.

Ian Black adds: Ireland would be a "very welcome member" of the Commonwealth, its secretary general signalled last week after prime minister Bertie Ahern said Dublin would debate re-joining the ex-colonials club that it left in 1949.

In the clearest indication yet that Ireland could become the Commonwealth's 55th member, Chief Emeka Anyaoku said he would be meeting the Taoiseach and President Mary McAleese next month.

Countries are still queueing up to join: Mozambique, never a British colony but surrounded by Commonwealth members, is in. Cameroon, only partly a British colony, joined in 1995. Yemen and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority — not yet an independent state — also want in.



A computer-generated image of the figures that will dominate the Dome ILLUSTRATION: HAYES DAVIDSON

Lifting the lid on the secrets of the Dome

IT was, we were told, "on time . . . on budget . . . on target", *writes Dan Glaister.* With 400 days to go before its opening night, some of the secrets of the Millennium Dome were finally revealed last week.

But as details were released, the project was dealt a blow when a committee of MPs was told that Underground trains may not start running from central London to the Dome until 11 days before the exhibition opens, on December 21.

London Transport chiefs blamed a series of crises on the Jubilee Line extension for the latest delay. There was, however, some good news: the 500 striking electricians voted unanimously to accept a settlement of their unofficial dispute, and returned to work.

With Dome details revealed, one of the biggest talking points about the controversial £758 million structure in Greenwich was finally laid to rest. What started life as a giant baby crawling towards its mother, and metamorphosed into a childless, androgynous figure, has now emerged as the Body Zone — two giant reclining figures, the male with its arm draped around the female.

The Body Zone is to be sponsored by Boots the Chemists, one of a series of sponsorship deals involving high street and blue chip names which organisers claim bring the total sponsorship raised to £120 million — twice as much as any previous sponsorship-funded event in Britain.

Other sponsors include Marks & Spencer, which is putting £12 million into the National Identity zone, and British Telecom, which has put the same amount into the Communicate zone.

Other details were slightly more cerebral. The Mind Zone, designed by architect Zaha Hadid, is a steel and plastic structure, where visitors will see how brain imaging can show which areas of the brain respond to different senses, and will demonstrate the brain's powers of recovery.

Radical reform urged on killer poverty

Sarah Boseley

A MAJOR independent inquiry last week produced a radical blueprint for social change and reforms across every area of government to address the ill-health and shortened lives that go with poverty.

The government-commissioned report of Sir Donald Acheson, the former chief medical officer, calls for a refocusing of social, health, housing and transport policies on the less well-off.

But although it accepts that poverty is the underlying reason for many early deaths and incidence of disease, and urges that benefits for poor families should be increased, it stops short of recommending higher taxes for the rich to close the wealth and health gap. It also attracted criticism for not costing its proposals.

The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, who commissioned the report, called it "a further stage in our unprecedented commitment to tackle inequalities in health".

But the scope of the Acheson vision is huge and the reforms he recommends would inevitably be costly. Sir Donald warned: "Just to cherry-pick one or two of the sexy recommendations like nicotine replacement therapy or fluoridation of the drinking water won't achieve much on their own unless we look at the redistribution of resources in society. Most of the departments of state will have to make major changes in their policy profile if anything much is to happen."

Across nearly every area of disease, from stroke to lung cancer and including mental health, accidents and suicide, the statistics show a health gradient across the social spectrum, from rich to poor.

The 164-page report is particularly concerned about the plight of women of child-bearing age, expectant mothers and young children. Women in disadvantaged groups are more likely to be under-nourished themselves and have smaller babies. Children who are thin or stunted at birth have an increased risk of heart disease in later life, and their own children are likely to be just as unhealthy.

The report outlined evidence that a family of four on income support only receives between 67 per cent and 90 per cent of the minimum for an adequate standard of living.

Blunkett plans fast track to top pay for teaching élite

Rebecca Smithers

AN ELITE group of trainee teachers will be given fast-track promotion and higher pay under proposals to be published this week.

The Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, is expected to announce a £20 million fund to reward 1000 selected trainees every year who will be taught in a variety of schools and through placement in industry. They will be given the chance to leap from £15,000 to £22,500 within four years, compared with up to seven years at the moment. Some two-thirds never rise above this ceiling.

At the heart of the Government's Green Paper on education are controversial plans to introduce performance-related pay for teachers — an idea strongly resisted by the teachers' unions, which have threatened industrial action.

After rigorous selection, high-flying graduates would be offered accelerated promotion, climbing the pay scale within four or five years, and then qualify for the new grade of advanced skills teacher, or leadership positions. The scheme could be piloted from next September before a national launch, backed by the £20 million fund over the first three years.

But the biggest teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers, rejected the proposal as "an insult to the vast majority of teachers". It said: "Selecting a privileged few will not deal with the problems which the profession faces. The NUT is also opposed to any pay structure linking pay with performance."

Other proposals in the Green Paper include bigger rewards for head teachers, with salaries of up to £70,000 and better training through a national college of school leadership.

Further education colleges last week were given a boost with unprecedented new funding of £725 million. The money is designed to raise standards in a sector widely seen as the "poor relation" of the education world.

But extra funding attracts extra responsibilities, Mr Blunkett warned, as he said that failing colleges — around one in 10 — should expect the same tough action as failing schools. The worst performing colleges would be closed down or merged with others.

The drive to raise standards also includes — for the first time — a requirement for all FE lecturers to hold proper teaching qualifications. At present, just over 70 per cent of teaching staff in the sector, which has traditionally drawn many of its trainers from industry and commerce, have such qualifications.

● The Government announced that it has earmarked £5.4 billion to tackle the backlog of school repairs over the next three years. It is in addition to money already distributed to about 6,000 schools in need of improvements.

Mandelson anger over gay smear story

Ewen MacAskill

THE man at the heart of allegations about the private life of Peter Mandelson, the Trade and Industry Secretary, broke his silence last weekend to dismiss allegations that the two had toured gay haunts in Rio de Janeiro.

Martin Dowle, director of the British Council in Rio, accused the Conservative party leader, William Hague, of conducting a smear campaign against the minister.

Mr Hague, during the Queen's Speech debate last week, surprised the Commons when he made a reference to "Lord Mandelson of Rio". The Government saw this as a deliberate and underhand attempt by Mr Hague to get into the political arena a series of lurid allegations made by Punch magazine last month about a visit to Brazil in July by Mr Mandelson.

The magazine claimed in a lengthy article that Mr Mandelson and Mr Dowle, a former BBC political correspondent, had visited bars and nightclubs in Rio.

Mr Dowle's decision to speak out represents a high-risk strategy as it will further fuel the story. The change of tack is partly because of Mr Hague and partly because of the growing body of newspaper cuttings about the visit which were going unchallenged. In a detailed rebuttal of the Punch story, Mr Dowle went over Mr Mandelson's itinerary for the first time. They have known each other since the 1980s, when Mr Dowle was a political correspondent.

"There was no nightclub at all. He was in bed at 10.30," Mr Dowle said.

Punch is owned by Mohamed Al Fayed, who also owns Harrods. Mr Dowle and Mr Mandelson discussed suing the magazine but decided against taking action in order not to give it more publicity.

Queen's Speech outlines future fights

Michael White

THE Government last week combined radical rhetoric with distinctly cautious commitment in a Queen's Speech programme of reform for 1999 that is certain to be dominated by the historic battle between the elected Commons and the hereditary peers.

The Prime Minister wants to purge the Lords without losing his reforming bills on health, welfare, trade union rights and the legal system to months of filibustering by peers determined to "die in the ditch" for their 700-year-old rights.

The price he is prepared to pay was evident last week in the important measures left out of the 22-bill Queen's Speech programme, or put on the back-burner for consultation. They included Lord Neill's reforms of party funding, the Freedom of Information Bill, the Food Standards Agency, and the plans of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, for switching millions of journeys to public transport.

In one of his most combative speeches as Conservative leader, William Hague mocked Mr Prescott for getting "precious little" in return for his loyalty. It stung Tony Blair into a late concession. On Channel 4 News, he said Mr Prescott's interim plans for a "shadow" Strategic Rail Authority would, after all, be made law this year "if we have time". With the Lords eager for a fight, that remains unlikely.

Mr Blair went out of his way to stress that his "government of big goals" has a big legislative programme to match, one in which Lords reform would be a sideshow compared with "the people's priorities" in modernising public services.

In reality, the Cabinet is likely to have to use the Parliament Act to impose its will on the 759 hereditary lords, only 18 of them Labour. Tory and crossbench peers claim that they will go quietly when the Government produces a blueprint for a "stage two" reform of the Upper House — one that would prevent it becoming what Mr Hague dubbed Mr Blair's "House of Cronies".

A foretaste of the battle came with last month's fifth rejection by the peers of the Government's "closed list" Euro-elections bill.

Mr Hague said of Mr Blair's vision of a reformed Lords: "Lord [Derek] Draper of Lobbygate, Lord [Geoffrey] Robinson of Offshore Funds in the Island of Guernsey, Lord Mandelson of Rio, and the Prime Minister himself, Baron of Ideas."

The Speech delivered by the Queen — centrepiece of only slightly reduced pageantry during the State Opening of Parliament — also contains other ambitious projects: to further what Mr Blair called modernisation of the public services, internal reform of the health service, more responsive and effective criminal courts, a shake-up for the fat cats of the legal professions, and — the biggest prize — incremental reform of the £90 billion welfare budget.

It was very New Labour: strong on presentation and intent, weaker on details and implementation.

For step-by-step reformers there are other nuggets: an end to the scandal of water supply disconnection for those who cannot pay their bills; a long-sought commissioner to protect the interests of the disabled; sexual equality for the age of consent. Such reforms address the needs of Labour's core constituency.

And yet there will be more than a sliver of disappointment among liberals and the left with this Speech, mainly over missing bills.

Austin

UNDERNEATH, I'M IN JEANS AND A T-SHIRT.

There are a host of omissions, from the promise to create directly-elected mayors (London apart) through to a ban on fox-hunting. Missing, too, is the right to roam, promised as a memorial to the late John Smith. There is no strategic rail authority to hammer the privatised rail companies running poor services — only a "shadow" one.

Lords reform apart, the biggest test of whether the Queen's Speech is progressive is welfare. It is debatable whether withdrawal of universal benefits and targeting them at the most needy is progressive. But there is a bill to give more rights to the disabled.

If Labour only had one term, then Lords reform might rightly be regarded as a diversion. But Labour knows it will be in power for much longer and that life will be a lot easier in a second term without the huge, in-built Tory majority in the upper house.

Labour, short of some unimaginable catastrophe, will win the next general election, even if with a reduced majority. In that second term, they can embark, if they choose, on a series of radical measures that will reduce the poverty gap, take Britain into the European single currency and introduce proportional representation for Westminster elections.

Then reform of the Lords will be seen as just one more step in a programme of radical reform.

The main points

What's in

- Reform of the House of Lords
- Reform of disability benefits
- Widowers' pensions
- New tax credits for those on benefits and low pay
- A Disability Rights Commission
- New trade union rights
- Reducing the age of consent for homosexuals to 16
- Scrapping the health service's internal market
- Insurance companies to pay NHS costs of traffic accidents
- 'Contracts' for young offenders promising good behaviour; more protection to court witnesses
- Shake-up of legal aid
- Hit squads to take over 'failing' councils
- A London mayor and assembly, plus some road measures
- Fewer benefits for asylum seekers; speedier appeals process
- Proportional representation for European elections
- Promoting electronic commerce via the Internet
- A Financial Services Authority
- More investment in poor countries

What's out

- Road charging for motorists
- Freedom of Information bill
- A Food Standards Agency
- Reform of party funding
- Elected mayors for cities

Saddam: too little and far too late

IF ANYONE imagined that the Iraqi crisis ended when Bill Clinton and Tony Blair called back the bombers, then events have proved how short-sighted they were. Saddam Hussein's men are already piling new obstacles in the path of United Nations weapons inspectors and warnings are being issued. So far, the tone is cool. Washington and London are sensibly distancing themselves from Ambassador Richard Butler and his teams, to drive home the point that the Iraqi leader is defying the will of the entire UN, not just of the two Western "hawks" on the Security Council. Iraq's pattern of deception and concealment and the fact that it uniquely used these terrible weapons against its own people amount to more than a reasonable suspicion that it has something to hide.

No easy prescriptions are available for dealing with the Iraqi leader. A more rational man would have seized the carrot being offered him in the summer by the UN, to co-operate with the inspections, secure a clean bill of health and an end to sanctions. Divisions between the hawks on the one hand, and Russia, France and China on the other, were working to his benefit. And, judiciously exploited, they still could. All the more reason to stay cool over the inspections and maintain unity.

But the situation has changed: now both the US and Britain are calling for the overthrow of the regime. Divided Iraqi opposition groups were urged last week to overcome their differences, though they could not agree to form a government-in-exile. And Britain's support for the indictment of Saddam and his top henchmen for war crimes increases the pressure.

Yet to what end, no one really knows. Plans for military action — which according to Pentagon estimates could have killed 10,000 Iraqis — were not accompanied by clear thinking about what might happen afterwards. And now, with the focus on political support for the opposition, nobody seems to know what that is supposed to achieve either. The Foreign Office's able minister for the Middle East, Derek Fatchett, put a positive gloss on his recent meeting with 16 different exile organisations. But it was not uncharitable to suggest, as one participant did, that, as in the tragic circumstances of 1991, the West is doing too little, far too late, to get rid of Saddam.

Straw faces a fateful decision

DAMNED if he do, and damned if he don't. That's supposed to be the fate of British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, over the extradition of Senator-for-life Augusto Pinochet. But Home Secretaries are there to take tricky decisions. The decision on Pinochet is no different in kind from those usually in the Home Secretary's in-tray, to do with prisoner release or the commutation of sentences. In other words, it's about the politics of justice.

Extradition is political business. Indeed, one of the grounds on which Mr Straw can refuse to allow proceedings to go ahead is his judgment that the case against Pinochet is "political", whatever that might mean. The boundary between law and politics is getting less distinct; it will get muddier when the new Human Rights Act is cited by judges who — as the Pinochet case shows — are neither clear nor intellectually compelling in their thinking about the state and its powers.

So all Jack Straw is being called upon to do is what he is professional at: politics. Weighing advantages, that is, to persons and party, making calculations that may, indeed ought to, encompass values, beliefs and that amorphous thing, the national interest. Pinochet's health is a real consideration. It wouldn't do for British proceedings to kill their subject, the adjudication of human rights abuses not generally involving the capital sentence. But there is more to health than doctors' opinions. Forensic medicine applied to "fitness to stand trial" has proved to be a plastic art. The Chilean foreign minister's "offer" that Pinochet stands trial at home kills the health question: if he is well enough to stand trial there, why not in Britain and in Spain? There are also calculations to be made about civil peace in Chile and how best to support, over the long term, the entrenching of participative democracy without, as at present, the threat of a military coup or rightwing revolt.

Mr Straw will, if he is wise, seek to protect himself from judicial review, for Pinochet's allies are rich and resourceful. He must forget his earlier student activist self and avoid giving any impression of feeding what, unfortunately, has seemed like a blood lust on the part of former leftwingers whose gods failed but whose appetite for Jacobin procedure is unabated. His obligations are now far wider.

The Pinochet case may come to be seen as the labour pains of the birth of a new system of human rights adjudication. It has already helped open up national systems to external scrutiny and so implicitly given present and future victims of nation-state tyranny the hope of vindication by outside means. There may be — it has to be recognised — problems in the way Pinochet was allowed to come to Britain under the official assumption he was immune; in his case the adage that non-knowledge of the law is no excuse hardly applies when the law is developing almost daily. But the individual's discomfort diminishes to the point of insignificance when measured against the standard of hope that this case has raised: the prospect that, albeit after many years, albeit at a distance, justice is ineffable.

Jack Straw is a mere agent of process . . . but what a process. On it depends not just the wishes of Chileans, at home and abroad, but a wider constituency needing assurance that this imperfect world offers an eventual possibility of justice. His affirmation of last week's House of Lords ruling is enjoined by the conviction that this world can be made a more just place.

Sexuality is a private affair

FOUR days, four news items. Item One: a moving obituary in the Times of Brigadier Michael Calvert. He was, by all accounts, an extraordinarily brave soldier and inspirational leader of men. He won a DSO and Bar for his exceptional acts of bravery as a Chindit commander against the Japanese in Burma and elsewhere. So far so good. But Calvert did not enjoy happiness in peace. The Times recorded: "From the war's end Calvert's life went steeply downhill." While serving in Germany in the early 1950s Calvert appeared before a Court Martial charged with "gross indecency" with three German youths who had called at his flat, with intent to steal. He was convicted and dismissed from the army he had served so well. His life thereafter spiralled into a mire of alcohol. In later life he worked as a gardener.

Item two: the friend of a prominent British politician is forced to issue a rebuttal of a lurid smear story published in a magazine — and hinted at in the House of Commons by the Leader of the Opposition — alleging that during a trip to Brazil the minister had savoured the nightlife of Rio de Janeiro and had visited a nightclub or two. The minister in question is reported to be gay.

Item three: Peter Tatchell, a leading gay campaigner, is arraigned before Canterbury Magistrates Court under Section 11 of the 1860 Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act for interrupting the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sunday sermon to protest against the Church's attitudes towards homosexuality.

Item four: a bronze and marble memorial to Oscar Wilde was finally unveiled this week in the heart of London 103 years after the trial that effectively broke him and led to his early death 98 years ago. At the ceremony Wilde's grandson, Merlin Holland, said: "I think we're reaching a point where I hope we will be like the continent of Europe where we will regard him as a writer and his sexuality as his own affair."

Too late, of course, for Wilde. Too late for Brigadier Calvert. But not too late, we hope, for others.

Nuclear thinking stuck in the cold war mud

Martin Woollacott

WHEN a religion is in decline there may be a long period when, even though its temples empty and its priests turn apostate, the tenets of belief are still haltingly and hollowly observed.

So it is with the religion of nuclear deterrence. Thousands of missile silos, shrines to destruction, are still powered and manned, nuclear-armed submarines still quarter the oceans, the scriptures are still studied in war ministries and staff colleges, and there are still converts, in the shape of India, Pakistan, or Iraq, who wish to join the elect. Yet nuclear deterrence, as a belief system, is close to collapse in the countries where it was invented.

Many of the generals who commanded nuclear forces, the politicians who were involved in nuclear decision-making, and the intellectuals who tried to create doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons have now repudiated deterrence, wholly or in part.

Those who now devise or advocate nuclear weapons programmes are usually mediocrities, time servers, or careerists, like the third rate scientists responsible for the Indian and Pakistani tests. Or they are politicians — like some in Russia, who see in nuclear weapons a currency that can buy continued great power status after economic and conventional military strength has dwindled away.

The terrible truth about this decayed religion is that it retains the capacity to exact unimaginable sacrifices from the human race.

True, the nightmare of a huge exchange of weapons between Russia and the United States may now be distant. It has been replaced in Western countries, but at a much lower level of awareness, by anxieties over proliferation, and over the acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorists or by "rogue states" like Iraq.

But, on the whole, the public in developed countries acts either as if nuclear weapons had already been abolished or as if the maintenance of these arsenals was a safe procedure. Meanwhile the political and military establishments act as if these weapons were as necessary as they ever were. They may not really believe it, but the habit of belief remains intact, largely because assessing deterrence in the degenerate form in which it now exists requires a revolution in understanding the history of the past 50 years, an effort which is only just beginning to be made.

What is left is the muddled idea that since nuclear deterrence supposedly "worked" in the past, it still "works" today. When this notion is challenged, even in a small way, Washington reacts with anger. The German defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, has consequently had to equivocate on his coalition's argument that Nato should adopt a No First Use policy.

Germany would do nothing unilaterally, he said after meetings in Washington last week. Yet a proper American response would have been to say that such a move was eminently worth exploring in preparation for the 50th anniversary summit of Nato in April next year.

The refusal to embrace No First Use of nuclear weapons in the past was based on Nato's need to be able to respond to Soviet conventional superiority. That conventional advantage has not only disappeared, but been replaced by a Western conventional superiority — to such an extent that Russia abandoned its own No First Use pledge in 19[..]

Not that the nuclear powers a[re] against arms reductions. The Pentag[on], it was revealed last week, may well go ahead with unilateral reductions of [..] nuclear forces in the event that the Rus[..]sians fail to ratify the Start II treaty. Th[e] weapons, it seems, cost too much.

The problem here, as Jonathan Sch[ell] points out in his new book, The Gift o[f] Time, is that arms reductions have be[en] part of the game of deterrence for ma[ny] years. They were and are aimed at p[re]serving the deterrent in a "safer" for[m] rather than abolishing it.

This is a critical and intricate qu[es]tion, as Schell demonstrates in his boo[k]. While advocates of arms reductions a[nd] advocates of abolition can wo[rk] together, there is a sharp distinct[ion] between real disarmers and those wh[o] propose only a certain "tidying up" of th[e] deterrent, to make accidents less lik[ely], and to appease non-nuclear powers.

Even between those who want th[e] deepest of cuts and those who wa[nt] abolition there is ultimately an import[ant] difference. Extreme reductionists m[ay] call for the standing down, the disass[em]bly or the destruction of all weapo[ns] with only a residual capacity to recon[sti]tute nuclear forces remaining. Abolitio[n] on the other hand, involves compl[ete] renunciation, with no road back [to] nuclear weapons envisaged.

Would that we were at the st[age] where such arguments could be join[ed] in practice rather than only in theo[ry]. But we are stuck in cold war mud. Th[e] men and women interviewed by Sch[ell], most of whom held important positi[ons] in the nuclear establishment, off[er] different solutions to the problem [of] nuclear weapons. But all are agreed th[e] present doctrine is a palsied holdo[ver] from the past.

THE only difference is that t[he] names of previous enemies ha[ve] been rubbed out and such form[u]lations as "a rogue state", or "terroris[ts]" are filled in instead.

The former US ambassador, Thom[as] Graham, led the successful Ameri[can] campaign to persuade non-nuclear sta[tes] to indefinitely extend the Non-Prolife[ra]tion Treaty. He recently wrote to N[ato] leaders — including Tony Blair — th[at] the non-proliferation regime will be [in] "grave danger" if Nato continues "to a[s]sign a high value to nuclear weapons, f[or] instance as an essential bulwark [of] Alliance cohesion".

Instead Nato ought to be movi[ng] toward No First Use, the de-alerting [of] tactical nuclear weapons preparatory [to] their abolition, and an end to nuc[lear] sharing.

As Schell's title implies, we have be[en] given time to deal with the nuclear me[n]ace, and have already wasted much of [it]. Bill Clinton, the president who could ha[ve] championed disarmament, did not do [so], partly because of his difficult relatio[ns] with the military. But the days when th[e] nuclear deterrent was sincerely d[e]fended by able generals, formidab[le] intellectuals, and powerful politicians a[re] over.

It is with us still because of insti[tu]tional inertia and a lingering refusal t[o] understand that something so powerf[ul] can be without use or value. The dete[r]rent for which we should be aiming, [as] Schell writes, is "the fear of returning t[o] a nuclear-armed world" that "would a[l]ways stand guard over the treaty by which the world had eliminated nuclear weapons".

The Gift of Time, Jonathan Schell (Granta)

The Washington Post

Milosevic Faces Revolt in Montenegro

R. Jeffrey Smith in Podgorica

A BIT like jabbing a bear with a small stick, political reformers in Montenegro continue to irritate the leaders of Serbia, in recent weeks by printing newspapers and magazines banned by the Serbian authorities and smuggling them into Belgrade.

The smuggling is the latest episode in a growing confrontation between Montenegro and Serbia, the two remaining republics in the federation of Yugoslavia. After decades of close relations, the governments are sharply at odds over a range of social, economic and political policies, and, according to some senior Montenegrin officials, are headed for an eventual split.

Already, Montenegro has halted its transfer of tax revenue to the federal government, which it claims has not been legally constituted since May. During the conflict this summer in Kosovo, senior Montenegrin officials publicly discouraged teenagers from reporting for the Yugoslav military draft. In recent weeks, the government announced plans to open its own "liaison" offices in five foreign capitals, including Washington, and is considering establishing a separate Montenegrin currency.

Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic has become one of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's fiercest critics, having denounced his refusal to grant autonomy to Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority and accused him of stifling freedom and economic reform. Some of his top ministers predict Montenegro will eventually declare independence, a move that would almost certainly provoke a similar declaration by the Kosovo Albanians and threaten another Balkan war.

"The divergence is something that you can feel, and it has a direct influence on the stability and survival of the country," said Djukanovic, 36, who took office in January and has won Western support for his democratic reforms. "We are not in a hurry to get out of Yugoslavia . . . but I am afraid that what Mr. Milosevic is doing will lead to [its] disappearance. . . . We will not be the hostages of [his] blind governing ambition."

With a declining economy largely based on the smuggling of foreign goods and a crushing financial burden from tens of thousands of refugees from neighboring Kosovo, Montenegrin leaders are desperate to improve living conditions by escaping from the international economic sanctions that are slowly strangling Yugoslavia. Their strategy has been to cut the cords that tie them to Serbia, one by one, in areas where they conclude that the federal government has failed to function or has "endangered us," as Djukanovic says.

The struggle is not between two equals. Montenegro has an estimated population of only 650,000, one-third that of the city of Belgrade — the capital of both Serbia and Yugoslavia — while its territory is one-twentieth the size of Serbia's. But the government in Podgorica already has taken over the tasks of licensing mass media, levying customs duties and approving imports and exports from its territory. It has also diverted $1 million in federal taxes to fund its pensions because Belgrade has not made payments for the past four months. And Podgorica has begun to negotiate its own trade deals with the West, having won permission to tap international loan funds under a partial exemption from the sanctions that was brokered with U.S. help.

"Day by day, there are fewer and fewer links with the federal administration," said Branko Perovic, who heads an energetic 30-person Foreign Ministry in Montenegro. "Only monetary and military links remain; there is nothing else."

Milosevic and his hand-picked prime minister, Montenegrin opposition leader Momir Bulatovic, have branded Djukanovic a traitor and accused his government of trying to engineer Yugoslavia's breakup.

But mindful of the historical affection that many Montenegrins retain for the Yugoslav federation, Djukanovic and his ministers have cast themselves as supporters of a reformed Yugoslavia, not of its further breakup.

But the signs are that Montenegrins are coming round to the idea of independence. A referendum held in the early 1990s showed overwhelming support for continued union. But a poll taken several weeks ago found the population deeply divided, with roughly 30 percent favoring each side and the remainder undecided or uninterested. Djukanovic said independence must be supported by two-thirds of the populace to prevent it from causing social unrest.

Sarajevo
BOSNIA
SERBIA
MONTENEGRO
Podgorica
ALBANIA
Adriatic Sea
40 km

Seeking support: Djukanovic is slowly pulling away from Belgrade

True Extent of Taliban Terror Revealed

Kenneth J. Cooper in Quetta, Pakistan

AFTER being attacked twice last year by the Taliban, the radical Islamic movement that controls most of Afghanistan, Mazar-e Sharif could no longer claim to be that battered country's last refuge from civil war. But hardly anyone in the dusty city on the northern plains was prepared for what happened when Taliban militiamen took control with a vengeance on their third try.

On August 8 and the days that followed, Taliban militiamen and their allies — including militant Muslims from neighboring Pakistan — methodically executed between 2,000 and 5,000 civilians in one of the deadliest mass killings of civilians in two decades of warfare in Afghanistan, according to interviews with witnesses who later fled to Pakistan and reports by international human rights investigators.

Taliban militiamen searched house to house for males of fighting age who belonged to the Hazara ethnic minority. Hazaras were gunned down in front of their families or had their throats slit. Others, thrown into the city's overcrowded jail, were executed by firing squads or crammed into closed tractor-trailers, where they sweltered all day in the summer sun until most perished from suffocation or heat stroke. In the evenings, the heavy trucks hauled the bodies to the nearby desert and dumped them in heaps like trash, according to the reports.

Sketchy reports of the slaughter were circulated at the time, but the full extent and the systematic character of the mass murder have only become known in the months since, as human rights investigators have interviewed survivors who fled to Pakistan and elsewhere.

The killings illustrated how the Afghan civil war — which began during the 10-year Soviet occupation and eventually settled into factional fighting — has in the past two years turned toward ethnic conflict fed by tribal hatreds and blood revenge. Although the Taliban fought its way to dominance under a unifying banner of Islam, in ethnic terms its rule represents a return to the pre-communist days of rule by Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group.

In taking over Mazar-e Sharif, the Taliban added a sectarian twist. The Hazara group singled out for slaughter is predominantly Shiite Muslim; the Taliban is a Sunni Muslim movement. In addition, the Taliban's attack on Mazar-e Sharif claimed the lives of nine Iranians, provoking Shiite-dominated Iran to mobilize tens of thousands of elite troops for border military exercises.

William Maley, an Australian specialist on Afghanistan, said the Mazar-e Sharif killing was "striking in its viciousness" even by Afghan standards. "What we saw in August was not civilians caught in the cross-fire between combatants, but an orgy of killing driven by racial and religious prejudice," he said. "Afghanistan is teetering on the edge of major ethnic conflict and perhaps even a genocide."

Mazar-e Sharif had remained the last major city holding out against the Taliban's strict rule of Afghanistan, which has included the imposition of Islamic law and tight controls on women. But until the shooting started that Saturday morning in August, few residents had any warning that most of the forces defending Mazar-e Sharif had slipped away overnight or had defected, leaving the city's gates wide open to the Taliban.

Shock troops arriving in pickup trucks and cars fired automatic weapons at everyone in sight, regardless of ethnicity, in an apparent effort to terrorize a rebellious population into submission, witnesses said.

"It didn't matter whether they were small children, women, men or old men. They were just shooting at people," said a Hazara woman now living in Quetta, a border city in Pakistan where thousands of refugees from Mazar-e Sharif have made their way.

Recent interviews of Hazara refugees — who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals — and reports released last month by the United Nations and Human Rights Watch were consistent in their general accounts of the initial indiscriminate killing, followed by days of targeting Hazaras. An Amnesty International report in September mentioned only the ethnic cleansing.

Officially, the Taliban regime based in Kabul says none of it happened, although Taliban officials have barred human rights investigators and journalists from Mazar-e Sharif.

The Taliban denounced the report of a U.N. human rights investigator as "vast propaganda," maintaining that its forces had killed only combatants, confiscated firearms from civilians and temporarily evacuated some residents.

Quebec Opts For State Capitalism

Steven Pearlstein in Montreal

WITH state capitalism in retreat nearly everywhere, would-be Quebec premier Jean Charest thought he had a winning issue in the campaign leading up to this week's provincial elections, in which he stood against the separatist government.

In Quebec, after all, the government still runs the health system, all the colleges and universities, the liquor stores and even the parking monopoly in downtown Montreal. Thanks to deep government subsidies, day care costs only $5 a day, and college tuition is frozen at $1,700 a year. And you'd be hard pressed to find a significant business that hasn't received a helping hand from Montreal, whether it be an actual cash handout or a favorable government contract. Not surprisingly, tax rates in this predominantly French-speaking province are the highest in North America.

But when Charest gingerly proposed that maybe government should cut income taxes by 30 percent and back off a bit from this involvement in Quebec's economy, he was met with protests from stalwarts in his own Liberal Party and derision from separatist premier Lucien Bouchard, who began to move up in the polls after characterizing Charest's economics as dangerously un-Quebec-like. Even the business community, which had strongly backed Charest's candidacy as the best way to head off Quebec's separation from Canada, has failed to come to the defense of his laissez-faire economics.

"It was a major mistake," said Alain Gagnon, director of the Quebec Studies Program at McGill University. "As soon as you attack the institutions of state capitalism here, you attack the very fiber of Quebec society."

Charest has taken the hint and has quietly dropped the campaign to drag Quebec into the mainstream of free-market capitalism. Yet, despite his climbdown, there is a good economic argument for updating the state's economic machinery.

Take the case of the day-care program, costing $5 a day, announced by Bouchard last year. It is immensely popular with parents — so popular that it is slowly driving out of business private, for-profit day-care providers that do not qualify for subsidies. And it has prompted such a demand for spaces that there are now an estimated 40,000 children on the waiting list. By 2002, the program is expected to cost $1.2 billion a year.

"Quebecers feel more secure knowing that Big Brother seems to be there watching out for their economic interests," said Daniel Racette, who heads the Institute of Applied Economics at the University of Montreal. "What they don't see, in part because it is so well hidden, is that it costs everyone a lot in higher taxes and higher prices and lost economic output to protect those farmers or subsidize that day care or create those jobs in aluminum plants. It's a very expensive model to maintain."



Kevorkian Charged Over Video Killing

Jon Jeter in Chicago
and Amy Goldstein

PROSECUTORS charged Dr. Jack Kevorkian with first-degree murder and other crimes, picking up the gauntlet that Kevorkian threw down by releasing a homemade videotape showing him administering a lethal injection to a terminally ill man from Detroit.

Oakland County (Michigan) Prosecuting Attorney David G. Gorcyca said he had no choice after reviewing unedited video tapes of the September 17 death of Thomas Youk, a 52-year-old auto mechanic who suffered from Lou Gehrig's disease. Portions of the tape, broadcast on CBS-TV's 60 Minutes, showed the retired pathologist and tireless suicide campaigner injecting Youk with a fatal dose of potassium chloride.

Kevorkian has helped more than 120 sick and dying people take their own lives and has been charged a half-dozen times — but never convicted — in connection with suicides that he facilitated by supplying know-how, drugs and equipment. But as far as is known, he never before had participated in a suicide.

Kevorkian said he took the bold new step — and encouraged 60 Minutes to report it — to force law enforcement authorities to try him again and seek to legally resolve the emotional issue of euthanasia.

"There is an obvious violation of the law that I will not turn my back to," Gorcyca said at a news conference in Pontiac, Michigan. "Notwithstanding Mr. Youk's consent, consent is not a viable defense to the taking of another's life, even under the most controlled environment. The time has come for Kevorkian's violation of the laws and the involvement in the complicated moral, legal and ethical issue to be resolved in a court of law, by a jury of peers and not in the headlines of the media . . ."

Michigan is one of a growing number of states in which right-to-live activists have lobbied state lawmakers to establish or toughen penalties for physicians who help their patients die. The state legislature this year approved a law that explicitly prohibits anyone from assisting in a suicide, and Kevorkian, who was acquitted in three previous trials, will be the first tried under the new law.

He was arraigned on charges of murder, illegally assisting a suicide and delivering controlled substances and released on $750,000 bond. He sat quietly in the Oakland County courtroom and nodded when a judge asked him if he understood the charges against him.

Geoffrey Fieger, the Michigan lawyer who has successfully defended Kevorkian since he began his campaign eight years ago, said Kevorkian's latest move represents a logical extension of his efforts to legalize euthanasia. Fieger predicted a jury will again acquit Kevorkian despite the new state law.

"No one in Mr. Youk's family is complaining," Fieger said. "We don't have a victim here."



But both sides in the highly-charged debate over assisted suicide and euthanasia questioned whether Kevorkian has gone too far in his defiant efforts to turn up the volume and force a legal confrontation.

"It's absolutely tragic [that] our answer to a suffering human is to snuff out their lives," said Lori Hougens, a Capitol Hill lobbyist for the National Right to Life Committee, which opposes assisted suicide.

Advocates of assisted suicide also wondered whether Kevorkian has turned the issue into his own personal stage, putting his agenda above that of the sick and dying. In the videotape broadcast on 60 Minutes, Kevorkian, who no longer has a license to practice medicine, appeared to direct the action rather than merely facilitate it, said Barbara Coombs Lee, executive director of Compassion in Dying Federation that lobbied voters in Oregon to make that state the first to legalize assisted suicide.

Timothy Quill, a University of Rochester internist who challenged New York state's ban on assisted suicide in a case that led to a Supreme Court ruling last year, said Kevorkian's decision was troubling for another reason.

"There were other options that were less doctor-driven. A prescription. Or he could have stopped eating or drinking," Quill said. "This person was capable of exerting that kind of will. So why did this happen in this particular way? It's because it's what Dr. Kevorkian wanted."

Juries in Michigan have acquitted Kevorkian in three trials on charges connected to assisted suicide, and a fourth ended in a mistrial. But the new state law effectively closes a loophole that allows assisted suicide if there is evidence that it ended a terminally ill patient's pain and suffering. In addition, Gorcyca added the murder charge, saying the death occurred with "premeditation and deliberation."

Russia's Nuclear Security Worries West

David Hoffman in Moscow

TONS of highly enriched uranium and plutonium at Russian scientific institutes and research facilities have been left vulnerable to theft and diversion because of the country's economic crisis, according to experts from the United States who recently inspected some locations.

The specialists have expressed alarm about the buckling of the "human factor" in protecting nuclear materials since the Russian ruble was devalued August 17, effectively slashing the meager salaries of nuclear plant workers and guards and further draining funds available for security.

"The Russian economy is the world's greatest proliferation threat today," said William C. Potter, director of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, who visited five Russian nuclear materials sites in October and has seen a total of 10 sites over the past year.

"I think the situation is extremely dire," said Kenneth N. Luongo, a former Energy Department official who is now executive director of the Russian-American Nuclear Security Advisory Council, which seeks to promote U.S.-Russian cooperation on the issue. "We have taken a gigantic step back to the beginning of the 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed and we worried about a breakdown of their security system."

Their concerns about the diminished protection were confirmed by other U.S. specialists — some of whom asked not to be identified — and echoed by a Clinton administration policymaker.

But Yevgeny Adamov, Russia's minister of atomic energy, said, "I am not particularly worried" about "serious materials and their leakage" from the Russian nuclear enterprises.

"That does not mean lack of concern for preventing this from happening," he said, "but I have no worry about the present because these materials are quite safe." Other Russian officials have acknowledged, however, that the nuclear complex is suffering from the country's economic turmoil, including months-long wage arrears.

The Soviet Union is believed to have produced more than 1,200 tons of highly enriched uranium and 150 tons of plutonium. More than half that material is contained in existing weapons, but an estimated 650 tons of weapons-usable material remains scattered across 11 time zones, according to the U.S. Energy Department. The material is located at civilian scientific centers and military research institutes.

Potter said a rogue state "would be happy to get just tens of kilos" of highly enriched uranium or plutonium, a quantity that could be found at "dozens of facilities" in Russia.

Specialists have long believed that obtaining weapons-grade fissile material is the hardest part of building a bomb. It was assumed that it would take a would-be nuclear state a decade or more to create its own fissile material for bomb-making and that the necessary facilities could be detected. But this barrier could be leapfrogged by purchasing or diverting material from Russia's vast and vulnerable warehouses.

The Soviet police state kept careful watch over nuclear materials, and the workers in the nuclear complex were relatively well off. But the demise of the authoritarian system and economic deprivations of Russia's struggling, young market economy have drastically changed the situation. In recent years, minor diversions of nuclear material have been discovered, and there may be others no one knows about.

The U.S. effort to secure Russia's fissile materials is centered in a $137 million-a-year Energy Department program with Russia's Atomic Energy Ministry, called "materials protection, control and accounting." It involves installing equipment to keep better track of bomb materials and providing training for Russian guards and workers.

This is just one part of a much larger, years-long drive by the West to help post-Soviet Russia control nuclear weapons. It includes the Nunn-Lugar program to consolidate and dismantle warheads and delivery systems, and an international drive to keep weapons scientists engaged in civilian work so they don't take their expertise to rogue states. Yet another initiative recently approved by Congress will try to advance long-delayed conversion to other occupations in the "closed cities," where weapons were designed and built.

The United States is also buying 500 metric tons — about 550 tons — of weapons-grade uranium from dismantled Russian nuclear weapons to be diluted for use as power plant fuel. The United States and Germany have also committed to help Russia dispose of its leftover chemical weapons.

Time to Give Euthanasia a Fair Hearing

OPINION

William Raspberry

OUR friend was dying — painfully — and she knew it. But she didn't want it to be "messy." Accordingly, she managed (I don't know how) to acquire a lethal stash of some sort of pills, gave it to her husband to keep so the nurses would not discover and destroy it, and then made him promise to produce it when she gave the word.

Thus assured of her dignified exit, she started calling her family and friends to come by her hospital room for a visit. Parents one evening, in-laws the next, then her closest friends and, next, my wife and me. She got special permission for her young children to visit her. Then, everything arranged to her liking, she told her husband: "It's time."

We know all this because she told us about it afterward. "He chickened out and wouldn't do it," she complained. She lasted another week, but it was a messy week, with too much pain and too much machinery and too much loss of dignity.

I recall that 20-year-old episode now not to fault her husband, who did what I likely would have done, but to say that Jack Kevorkian has a point.

Oh, sure, the man drives us all a little crazy with his theatrics — especially this latest stunt of his where he gave CBS's 60 Minutes a videotape of him (he says) giving a fatal injection to a victim of Lou Gehrig's disease.

But if his point was to get us thinking about euthanasia, he succeeded with me. If the videotape was the real goods (it wouldn't surprise me if he faked it), then it seems clear that Kevorkian did precisely what Thomas Youk asked him (albeit in monosyllables) to do. He'd been given time to think it over, to say "no" any time he felt like it, and he declined to say it.

I'm still a long way from wanting to hand to anyone — doctors and family included — the right to take another's life without clear consent. I'd rather have the patient himself trigger the terminal event. That, apparently is what happened in 120 previous assisted suicides Kevorkian has been involved in. But if that isn't possible — as it wasn't in my friend's case — I'd settle for unambiguous instruction.

I don't suggest that a jury would — or should — reach the same conclusion. But it does strike me as time to give some thought to enacting the option Kevorkian has been urging. With safeguards of course — maybe a "panel" of physicians to certify the life-ending decision.

But do we really want to take away from the terminally ill that last gasp of control over their own lives? I remember what the journalist Stewart Alsop said shortly before his death in 1974: "There comes a time when a dying man needs death the way a tired man needs sleep."

Shouldn't the dying one himself be permitted the dignity of saying: "It's time"?

Steve Vogel spent a day with military doctors in Honduras who are trying to stave off epidemics of cholera and provide emergency care for victims of Hurricane Mitch

A Brief Respite from Suffering

THE TOWN was nearly empty when the convoy carrying U.S. military doctors and nurses pulled in shortly after noon.

For four hours, the column of five Humvees had wound its way up a tortuous muddy road leading here through the mountains. Several times, faced with washed-out sections and precipitous drops, team members had been convinced the convoy would have to turn around, but the vehicles pressed on.

Almost every day since November 5, such a convoy has headed out from Soto Cano Air Base, where an American task force providing aid to victims of Tropical Storm Mitch is based. Each time, they have gone to a different village selected by Honduran medical authorities, trying to stave off feared epidemics of cholera and to provide emergency care to victims who have had little or no medical attention since the storm and flooding.

Recently it was the turn of Laguna del Rincon, an isolated mountain town in the central Honduran province of Comayagua.

There were no telephones, but messengers were sent out with word that the U.S. team had arrived.

Air Force Capt. Mark Luff and the other medical team members had little doubt they would soon be busy. With practiced efficiency, they quickly converted the dusty one-room schoolhouse in the middle of town into a clinic. They carted in green metal chests filled with tongue depressors, bandages and rubber gloves.

They grabbed wooden school desks and benches, arranging them to form a reception desk, a waiting area and four examination tables. In an adjoining building, soldiers set up a pharmacy to hand out medicines.

Atop his school desk, Luff, a family practitioner at Howard Air Base in Panama, set out his stethoscope and a box of surgical gloves, pausing to chase out a dog that had wandered in.

By then, patients had begun to gather. Mothers appeared with babies in their arms and children clutching their skirts. Dirty-faced children arrived on their own. Each in turn was directed to the doctors, who sat behind the child-size desks in military fatigues.

Army Sgt. Giovanni Saraos, from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, worked the door, controlling the flow of patients and chatting with families in Spanish.

Many of the patients were not in good health to start with, but their conditions had worsened. The dam holding a reservoir of drinking water for Laguna del Rincon had been destroyed by the flooding, so townspeople were drinking contaminated water. There were abundant cases of diarrhea, scabies, respiratory infections and conjunctivitis.

Luff, working with an Army translator, examined a tiny boy who was suffering from an upper respiratory infection. The doctor was startled when the boy told him he was 8 years old.

Outside, the trickle of people had become a torrent. Women, all with children on their laps, sat on benches in front of the green-and-yellow concrete building. The line grew to more than 100.

"A lot of them have walked two hours to get here," said Evaristo Suazo Chavier, head of the local emergency committee. In his arms was his own 3-day-old son, Antonio, suffering from diarrhea and a rash.

Army Staff Sgt. German Villon, one of the convoy escorts, paced the room anxiously, eyeing the growing crowd outside.

"We're not going to be able to see them all. It's terrible," said Villon. "One thing's for sure: Little kids with diarrhea, they come to the front of the line."

Supplies must be flown in to many isolated villages

The cases seemed to get more serious the longer the doctors worked. Luff treated a 7-month-old boy with diarrhea who was showing signs of serious dehydration.

Back home, Luff would have instantly ordered the baby admitted to a hospital. If the child's condition was worse the next day, he told the mother, she would have to get him to a hospital in the city.

By now, several hundred people had arrived and the dusty, barren schoolyard was filled. People were still coming down the road. The doctors would have to leave soon, and would not be back. The next day, they would go to another village as needy as this.



Aid stations are deluged by children needing treatment

Army Lt. Dwight Berry, the convoy commander, signaled it was time to pack up. "We have to be out of here by three," said Berry. "We're not allowed to be on the mountain when it's dark. I have to be the bad guy."

The rules of the task force are firm. The roads are considered too dangerous to be traveled after sunset. With another four-hour journey ahead of them, the medical team was pushing it.

Mothers pushed their children to the front, where they implored Saraos to let just one more child in.

Saraos looked pleadingly to the nurse at the reception desk. She shook her head.

"That's it," said Sasso. "It hurts my heart, too."

"It hurts," said Saraos.

He addressed the assembled crowd. "*No mas.*"

No more. He said it several times, and then spun away and turned his back to the pleading faces. He was close to tears. "I don't want to say it anymore, you know? It gets harder every time."

Time for a New Approach in South Asia

The United States responded to nuclear tests by India and Pakistan with economic sanctions. This policy is both inadequate and dangerous, says **Joseph S. Nye Jr.**

WHEN INDIA and Pakistan shocked the world this past May by testing nuclear weapons, the United States responded by imposing severe economic sanctions. Now Pakistan and India have offered to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty if the United States will lift its sanctions, although several key senators have opposed such a move. But there is little prospect that American economic punishment will roll back the South Asian situation and some danger it will turn Pakistan into a failed state with nuclear weapons. Outrage and sanctions are not an adequate U.S. policy.

American policy for South Asia's bombs should have two objectives: It should limit damage to the global consensus against the spread of nuclear weapons; and, inside the region, it should reduce the risk that the bombs will ever be used.

The consensus against nuclear proliferation is not as fragile as some assert. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy stated that he expected to see up to 25 nuclear weapon powers within a decade. Instead, 35 years later there are eight nuclear states: five recognized in the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty plus India, Pakistan and, by many published accounts, Israel. On the positive side, South Africa gave up its nuclear capability with the end of apartheid, and Argentina and Brazil reversed their incipient nuclear arms race.

In 1995, 178 states agreed to an indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The next year 133 states signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. A few countries — North Korea, Iraq, Iran and Libya — are actual or suspected violators of their treaty obligations and have to be treated as special cases. For most states, however, the Non-Proliferation Treaty not only promises progress toward global nuclear disarmament in the long run, but also provides current reassurance that their regional neighbors are not developing nuclear weapons.

In other words, India and Pakistan are not typical cases. At the time they detonated their bombs, neither had signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. India already had developed a nuclear capacity in the 1970s and Pakistan in the 1980s.

It is important to show these two states that their open tests and declarations, driven in part by domestic politics, have not been fruitful. Power in the 21st century will depend on economic growth and mastering the information revolution, not on brute nuclear force. Nuclear weapons are not a power equalizer, and they cannot be used to blast one's way into an imagined great power club. India and Pakistan today have all the problems and limitations they had last April.

Nuclear weapons cannot be used to blast one's way into an imagined great power club

To reinforce this point, other states should make clear that they will not amend the Non-Proliferation Treaty to give India and Pakistan de jure nuclear status, even if we take note of their de facto situation. We should also state that we will not support India's claim to a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council but will support the claims of Japan, thus breaking the link between status and nuclear weapons.

We should agree to lift sanctions if India or Pakistan adhere to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but that is not enough. Both countries should agree to restrictive nuclear export policies consistent with the Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines. We should also encourage them to join the negotiations in Geneva on the cutoff in the production of fissile materials.

At the same time, the United States should try to limit dangers within the South Asian region. Some observers believe that stable nuclear deterrence will evolve there just as it did between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. But the analogy is flawed. India and Pakistan have a common border. The two powers have clashed violently three times in a half-century. Conflicting territorial claims make Kashmir a flash point. Neither state has developed elaborate technologies to control nuclear weapons; nor have India and Pakistan engaged in learning through a prolonged arms-control dialogue.

To remedy these deficiencies, the United States should offer India and Pakistan advice on the command and control of nuclear weapons, including technical assistance on permissive action links that prevent unauthorized use if they fall into terrorists' hands. We also can help to set up hot lines and talks that serve as confidence-building measures. We should offer to share with both sides certain information that our Space Command collects on missile launches. We should encourage the two states not to deploy weapons to front-line commands and to negotiate arrangements in which warheads do not stand mated to missiles. Finally, we should offer to convene a five-power security dialogue of America, Russia, China, India and Pakistan to discuss ways to improve regional stability.

Some will object that these measures are not sufficiently harsh. Outrage and sanctions probably played a useful role six months ago, but they are no longer sufficient if we are interested in furthering America's twin objectives of reinforcing the global nonproliferation consensus while saving lives in South Asia.

Joseph S. Nye Jr. is Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a former U.S. assistant secretary of defense

Keep in touch with your savings

Round-the-clock telephone banking facilities are proving invaluable for expatriate investors who need regular and rapid access to their accounts

BANKING by phone, fax or modem is hardly a new phenomenon. Most UK banks can deal with at least basic transactions over the telephone, and there are now commercial banks which conduct all their business via phone, fax and Internet. Whether UK-based savers use these services for convenience, or because the banks that operate them are able to offer higher interest rates and lower charges, is open to question.

They are fortunate in that they have the luxury of choice. For expatriates, scattered across the globe, visiting the branch in the high street is obviously not an option. This makes reliable channels of communication with your bank an absolute necessity, and something many people would prefer not to leave to the vagaries of the international postal system.

Apart from the danger of loss or theft, the postal service is slow. All letters destined for the Isle of Man, and Jersey and Guernsey, for instance, are routed via the British mainland and Royal Mail International. It can take between three and five days for a letter to arrive from the US east coast, four days to a week from Japan, and anything up to 10 days from Australia.

The advent of round-the-clock telephone banking has reduced customers' dependence on the postal system. In most cases, they can now use the phone to conduct almost all of their banking business, from checking an account balance to transferring money to paying bills and third parties. Some banks even allow customers to order foreign currency or buy and sell shares over the phone.

When opening an offshore account, you clearly need to make sure the bank or building society offers telephone banking. But being able to speak directly to your bank doesn't solve the problem completely. Like most offices, banks are able to receive faxes any time of the day or night, but at some branches telephone inquiries may be dealt with only during office hours.

International time zones can also make it difficult for savers trying to contact their bank. Some parts of the world are separated by as much as a 12-hour time difference, so ringing your bank manager might not be feasible unless you are awake in the early hours of the morning.

If your bank doesn't offer a 24-hour service, make sure you check how soon queries or requests will be dealt with if you leave a message on an answering machine. Also make sure it is possible to fax instructions and money transmission orders.

Fortunately, a growing number of offshore banks and building societies are now offering 24-hour services, or at least extended hours for telephone banking. The Royal Bank of Scotland International and Midland Offshore in Jersey have a 24-hour service, while others, such as the Co-operative Bank in Guernsey, keep phone lines open until midnight, seven days a week. Lloyds Bank Offshore has staff available to deal with telephone or fax requests from 8am until 10pm local time.

However, the majority of banks and building societies still operate only within working hours, which are typically 8am or 9am to 5pm or 6pm. For the remainder of the time, answering machine services are usually available.

The time it takes banks and building societies to respond to your instructions is also important. The quicker they receive an instruction, the faster it will be executed. Different banks have different deadlines, but in general instructions must be given before noon for action to be taken the same day. Some, such as the Bank of Scotland (Isle of Man), will act on an instruction received as late as 5pm, depending on the type of transaction, whereas Lloyds in Jersey and the Isle of Man, and the Co-op all have a 3.30pm deadline.

Services offered via the telephone and fax vary widely, but most banks allow customers to receive information about their current or deposit accounts, obtain other account information (such as whether or not a cheque has cleared), and transfer funds to other accounts.

For example, in the case of RBSI, which pioneered 24-hour offshore banking in 1995, customers can check their balance by phone, transfer money between accounts and amend direct debits. However, instructing bill payments or buying and selling foreign currencies cannot be carried out until the following day.

At Halifax International in Jersey customers are able to use the telephone or fax to check the balance on their current account, transfer funds to any other accounts they hold at that bank, and even transfer up to £1,000 to third parties.

For your own peace of mind, you

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should check what security arrangements the bank or building society has in place. Most require codes or passwords for their phone and fax services. For example, Lloyds Bank Offshore demands that customers quote a password when they ask for any information or advice via the telephone. Instructions are only accepted by phone.

At Midland Offshore, customers opening an account are sent a computer generated password and a separate phone banking number. When they phone the bank, they are asked for two random letters from their password and two random numbers from their phone banking number. After this, customers may then choose their own password, and each time they phone they will be asked for two randomly chosen letters from their new password. The bank also holds on file other personal information provided by the customer.

As part of most phone banking services, customers are asked to complete and sign indemnity forms which absolve the bank or building society of all responsibility should something go wrong. In most cases, genuine mistakes can be rectified, but this often takes time.

EXPATRIATES are recognised as one of the most computer-literate sectors of society, with a relatively high proportion using personal computers at home and at work to communicate via the Internet. Yet the offshore banking sector has been slow off the mark in setting up Internet banking services. Most banks with a website use it purely for marketing purposes, providing information on offshore banking and individual services, although in due course customers may be able to conduct all their banking business via the Internet.

Banks and building societies offer Internet banking only on a limited scale at the moment, but several are considering expanding such services, with a number of them already taking messages from customers via e-mail. Issues of security remain of primary concern but it seems only a matter of time before offshore banking via the Internet becomes as routine as banking by telephone is now. — *Ian Wylie*

At the push of a button . . . banking services offered via the telephone and fax vary widely, but most offshore banks and building societies allow customers to check account balances, transfer money, pay bills, and in some cases even buy and sell foreign currency and shares

Directory inquiries

Britannia International Ltd
(+44) (0)1624 681100
C&G Channel Islands Ltd
(+44) (0)1481 715422
Co-operative Bank (Guernsey)
(+44) (0)1481 710527
Derbyshire (IOM)
(+44) (0)1624 663432
First Active Bank CI Ltd
(+44) (0)1481 710400
Irish Nationwide (IOM) Ltd
(+44) (0)1624 673373
Lloyds Bank Offshore Ltd
(+44) (0)1534 284000
Midland Bank Offshore Ltd
(+44) (0)1534 616000
Nationwide International
(+44) (0)1624 663494
Northern Rock (Guernsey) Ltd
(+44) (0)1481 718121
Portman Channel Islands Ltd
(+44) (0)1481 822747
Bank of Scotland (IOM)
(+44) (0)1624 644040
Royal Bank of Scotland Int
(+44) (0)1534 24365
Singer & Friedlander (IOM)
(+44) (0)1624 623235
Standard Chartered (CI)
(+44) (0)1534 507001
Sun Bank Offshore Ltd
(+44) (0)1534 608060

Source: *Moneyfacts*

Beating the tax collectors

Swimming in tax receipts: millions pay too much on their savings

Changing your residence status could expose you to a substantial tax liability if you are not well prepared

THE Treasury's crackdown on money laundering and tax evasion in Britain's offshore tax havens shouldn't worry expatriates too much, but it is a good time to make sure your tax status is correct, *writes Ian Wylie*. You don't want your hard-earned savings to put you on the wrong side of the law.

The most important thing is to make sure the Inland Revenue has given you the correct tax status because this directly equates to the amount of tax you will be liable for on your savings.

The easiest method of working out your residence status is to calculate the number of days a year you spend in the UK. If that equates to 90 days or more in any one tax year, you will be categorised as "Ordinarily Resident". If you intend spending fewer than 90 days in the UK during a tax year, you will qualify as "Not Ordinarily Resident".

Both these classifications lift you outside the UK tax system for all income and capital gains tax purposes. The crucial difference is that "Ordinarily Resident" expats must wait three to four years to get their tax freedom — the time it takes for the Inland Revenue to assess their resident status. Those labelled "Not Ordinarily Resident" are able to enjoy their tax privileges from the day they depart Britain.

The crucial piece of paper that clarifies your status with the Inland Revenue is a P85. If you are moving abroad and have not completed and returned this form, then do so immediately. Some expats pay a tax expert to fill it in for them, for the very good reason that getting it right can save you a lot of money.

Knowing your tax status is equally important if you are returning to the UK. Getting professional advice before repatriation is vital, otherwise hard-earned savings which have grown in a low-tax or no-tax environment may be eroded by the more rigorous attentions of the Inland Revenue.

Ideally, you should start the preparations at least a year before you intend to return to Britain. If such advance planning is not possible, make sure you put your plans into action before the actual tax year (April to April) in which you will be returning. The main reason for this is because returning expatriates are treated as tax residents for the year in which they arrive, even if they land the week before the tax year ends. It is absolutely vital that every aspect of your financial portfolio is dealt with well before your non-resident tax status changes.

When thinking about how to minimise your tax liability, bear in mind that, while you are resident abroad, your income and capital gains from sources outside the UK, such as offshore banks and building societies, will be free from British taxes. However, once you return with the intention of staying permanently in the UK, income and gains from anywhere in the world will be subject to tax by the Inland Revenue.

One way of avoiding tax on income and gains which accrued while you were overseas is to "bed and breakfast" your savings and investments. This tax-minimising procedure used to entail disposing of assets one day and re-purchasing them the next, or closing one account and then opening another at the same institution. The scope for this activity has been severely curtailed within the UK; you are now not permitted to repurchase an investment for at least a month after you have sold it. A way around this is to sell your shares today, and let your spouse buy them tomorrow.

When it comes to offshore investments, there is one golden rule: before coming home, sell everything with a gain and hold everything with a loss. This means the profits will remain outside the UK tax net, while the losses will be brought with you and could be offset against a future tax bill.

Expats should also make sure they clear any tax liability in the country where they have been resident. For instance, if earnings have accrued from savings interest, they could be liable for a local tax. Check too whether the local tax rules require a tax clearance certificate before you leave the country.

Given the complexities involved in changing residence, it is worth getting sound professional advice to steer you and your financial portfolio through this period. It will cost you a few hundred pounds in fees but that's peanuts compared with the tax bill you could be liable for.

S Africa awakes too late to Aids menace

Frédéric Chambon
in Johannesburg

AIDS cases are rising sharply in the states of southern Africa. Along with Zimbabwe, South Africa has one of the fastest growth rates of the disease in the world. The virus has already infected 3-4 million people out of a population of 40 million. Almost 1,500 people are infected every day, most of them black. This dubious distinction has only compounded existing problems inherited from the apartheid regime and its inequalities.

The epidemic places a social and economic burden on the country that could eventually threaten its reconstruction and development efforts. Nkosazana Zuma, the health minister, said recently that she thought Aids was a more formidable enemy than apartheid, and that it threatened South Africa's very survival as a nation.

According to the South African health ministry, 20 per cent of the country's working population could be contaminated by 2000. Aids, which chiefly affects people in the 15-40 age group, could cut swathes through South Africa's youth and manpower. According to some experts the disease could lower average life expectancy from 60 to 40 years by 2010, while hospitals are already having difficulty in fulfilling their public health role.

HIV-related complaints are responsible for 15-20 per cent of hospital admissions. Soweto hospital, which caters for the 3 million inhabitants of South Africa's largest black township, serves as a benchmark. A third of babies born there are HIV-positive. At national level, 16 per cent of pregnant women carry the virus, and South Africa has some 200,000 Aids orphans.

Although hit by Aids only fairly recently, the country is now in a desperate predicament. The epidemic is raging through the Horn of Africa after having struck the central part of the continent. The time-lag in South Africa's case can largely be explained by political circumstances. The epidemic has been described as apartheid's "time bomb": it exploded once the isolation imposed by a regime of racial segregation came to an end.

Up to the end of the eighties, the international boycott of South Africa, combined with the fact that it was either at war or had broken off diplomatic relations with many African countries, restricted both trade and population flows.

That situation changed with the end of apartheid in the early nineties. The opening up of borders caused a massive influx of immigrants attracted from all over Africa by the promise of an eldorado in the new South Africa.

Aids also spread quickly because the danger it represented was underestimated and no proper prevention policy was implemented. A way of life inherited from the era of racial segregation was another factor. The forced displacement of black people and the regrouping of workforces far from their places of origin separated families, causing an increase in prostitution and the number of sexual partners outside marriage.

These factors explain why the incidence of Aids is high in mining communities, where migrant workers lead solitary lives in hostels. Nearly 20 per cent of miners are HIV-positive. The fight against the disease has been hampered by the fact that attitudes have changed only very slowly. Aids is a taboo subject in traditional African society, and it took the authorities a long time to measure the gravity of the epidemic.

Faced with the mammoth task of rebuilding South Africa, the black government has been slow to make the fight against Aids one of its priorities. Several scandals revealed serious malfunctions. Zuma became one of the most heavily criticised ministers following a misappropriation of funds designated for the fight against Aids, and her support for a controversial Aids therapy. It was only in 1998 that the government really got to grips with the problem by setting up an interministerial committee and earmarking $14 million to finance its work.

At the beginning of October, vice-president Thabo Mbeki launched a nationwide Aids prevention campaign. In a solemn address on television, he called on South Africans to mobilise their efforts and change their behaviour. A real danger existed, and people should no longer turn a blind eye to it: "Aids is my problem, and it's your problem," he said, urging people to use condoms if they wanted to have sex outside marriage.

Aids prevention organisations welcomed the campaign, but felt it was rather late in the day and might have been more effective if it had been launched by President Nelson Mandela himself. They have called for the implementation of concrete measures such as a review of prevention policy and greater access to treatment for the most underprivileged patients.

(November 25)

Le Pen slaps down his ambitious deputy

Christiane Chombeau

ON NOVEMBER 20, the leader of France's far-right National Front (FN), Jean-Marie Le Pen, responded to a ruling by a Versailles court of appeal that confirmed his disqualification from standing for public office by announcing that he had decided to take his case to the supreme court of appeal.

The Versailles ruling reduced from two years to one the period of disqualification, which had originally been imposed on Le Pen after he physically attacked Annette Peulvast-Bergeal, the Socialist candidate at the May 1997 general election at Mantes-la-Jolie. A legal technicality entitles Le Pen to take his case to the supreme court of appeal: the Versailles ruling erroneously described the commune of which Peulvast-Bergeal was mayor as Mantes-la-Jolie, not Mantes-la-Ville.

Although Le Pen described the Versailles ruling as "scandalous", "hypocritical" and "neither fish nor fowl", it does allow him, once he has lodged his appeal with the supreme court of appeal, to stand at the 1999 European elections, while at the same time not jeopardising his chances of entering the presidential race in 2002.



Le Pen: reasserting himself

The great advantage for Le Pen in leading the FN list next year is that it will put an end to the deep divisions which have split his party since July. They were triggered by his announcement that his wife would replace him as head of the FN list if the courts prevented him from standing.

According to party activists, there is no end in sight to the running battle between the FN's president and its general delegate, Bruno Mégret, who brought his dispute with Le Pen out into the open when he said he was determined to head the FN list in his capacity as "second-in-command" of the party if ever Le Pen were prevented from doing so himself. One politburo member says: "Le Pen is determined to get his revenge and sideline all those who supported Mégret."

Ever since failing to persuade the politburo to punish Mégret on September 8, Le Pen has consistently set out to humiliate and clip the wings of his general delegate. He decided, for example, to put Jean-Claude Martinez, who has made no secret of his anti-Mégret feelings, in charge of the European election campaign — a task normally assigned to the general delegate. Criticism and threats were then directed at Damien Bariller, Mégret's chief adviser, and Philippe Olivier, the deputy general delegate, on the grounds that they had criticised Martinez — who had himself sniped at them earlier.

More recently, Le Pen took umbrage at the decision by the FN group on the Île-de-France regional council to organise, with Mégret, a meeting on the theme of Europe in Paris on November 25. After failing to get the meeting cancelled (the group voted by a large majority for it to go ahead), Le Pen decided to invite himself to the event, and called the rebels to a meeting at his Saint-Cloud offices on November 24.

Using the European election campaign as a pretext, he also summoned Bariller, who runs the party organ, Français d'Abord (French First), so they could together "rejig" the paper's editorial policy. He demanded, among other things, that leaders written by Bruno Gollnisch, general secretary of the party and a Le Pen supporter, should take precedence over Mégret's leaders in every other issue. Le Pen's henchmen, chief of whom is his son-in-law, Samuel Maréchal, head of the FN's youth section, are reportedly doubling up those parts of the party machine controlled by Mégret, such as the National Training Institute and the FN's propaganda unit.

Le Pen has also asked his daughter Marine, who is a lawyer, to go through the statutes and accounts of all associations and companies in which Mégret is involved with a fine-tooth comb. In an attempt to show who is boss, Le Pen has made a point of reminding staff at the FN headquarters that "only one photograph is authorised in our offices" — his own, of course.

(November 21)

Unions take a Euro stand

EDITORIAL

IT CAN hardly have been much consolation to commuters, but there was a positive side to the railway strike on November 23: it was European-wide. There was of course no reason to rejoice that rail services had been disrupted in Belgium, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain and Portugal. Yet the fact remains that the "Eurostrike" confirmed the existence of a slow and salutary process of change which, with each new industrial dispute, has seen the first organised stirrings of European social solidarity.

There have been precedents: Renault's European workforce came out firmly against the closing of the car manufacturer's Vilvoorde plant in Belgium two years ago; a first "Eurostrike" took place in November 1996; and workers at Levi Strauss protested against the relocation of factories in Hungary and Poland. Union battles are now planned, decided on and waged at the decision-making level which affects salaried employees — that of Europe.

On this occasion it was the European transport commissioner, and former British Labour party leader, Neil Kinnock, who proposed a draft directive on the future of Europe's railways. If they are to survive, he said, they must be privatised. Railway workers regard such a move as a threat to jobs and public services. The important thing in this case, however, is to welcome the fact that the trade unions' expression of their fears and their pressure on EU transport ministers have taken place at the only meaningful level — Europe.

A single market needs a single trade union movement, just as the European Union requires European-wide trade union organisations. The free movement and investment of capital within the boundaries of Europe should be matched by a European system that protects workers' rights. This, too, is an area where Europe is being constructed.

In a recent interview with Le Monde the new German finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine, called for wage bargaining to be conducted at a European level. The aim is to ensure that January's introduction of the euro does not encourage companies to trim their payroll costs.

At a time when the French parliament is examining the constitutional changes that France will need to make if it is to ratify the Amsterdam treaty covering the delegation of sovereignty to the EU, the trade unions have shown they are prepared to give an organised response to decisions taken in Brussels.

That is a good thing. Indeed, if that were not the case, the EU would probably not remain so popular in France, with 77 per cent of the population in favour of it, according to a recent poll.

(November 25)

Saving an icon from academic oblivion

Jacques Mandelbaum

Le Mystère René Clair
Pierre Billard
Plon 480pp 165 francs

HAVE the films of René Clair endured well? It is tempting to say no. Film buffs rate his work well below that of such film-makers as Jean Vigo and Jean Renoir, and the public only know of him through a handful of films whose fame seems due less to the director than to the actors who star in them — for example, Michel Simon and Gérard Philipe in La Beauté du Diable (1950), or Michèle Morgan and Philipe in Les Grandes Manoeuvres (1955).

This year is the centenary of Clair's birth and various cinémathèques all over France have organised seasons of Clair films, giving us the opportunity to refresh our memories and decide whether he deserves to be counted among the greats of cinema.

This question has been taken up, in Le Mystère René Clair, by the film historian Pierre Billard. He describes the challenge he faced when writing the book: "At a time when the centenary of his birth gives us the urge to celebrate, we have to ask ourselves: whom are we celebrating? A luminary of the French cinema who occupies a pre-eminent position he never laid claim to but long assumed? Or a film-maker greatly the worse for wear after being ungratefully consigned by posterity to a long purgatory of academic respectability?"

Billard makes that duality the keystone of his biography. He suggests that it governed Clair's life and work much more than it did his posthumous reputation.

Clair was born René-Lucien Chomette on November 11, 1898. He was a dilettante writer and poet until the beginning of the twenties. Then he worked as a journalist on the daily L'Intransigeant, and acted in movies by Yakov Protazanov and Louis Feuillade.

He cut his directorial teeth with the film-maker Jacques de Baroncelli, before going on to direct his first film, Paris Qui Dort (1924). In it, Paris and its inhabitants are sent to sleep by a hypnotic ray, while the keeper of the Eiffel Tower and a few friends, who have escaped its effects, inject a burlesque and libertarian element into the film. At 26, Clair had made a magnificent film whose sole subject was that mechanical and magical illusion of the world called the cinema.

It marked the start of an intense period of creativity which made Clair famous first in France, then internationally, with such films as Entr'acte (1924), Un Chapeau de Paille D'Italie (1927), Sous Les Toits de Paris (1930), Le Million (1931) and A Nous La Liberté (1931). The main protagonists were the ordinary people of Paris and its suburbs, and the films looked forward to the "poetic realism" of Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert.


René Clair: he saw cinema as a popular art form

Clair also called for the cinema to be accepted as an art form in its own right. But unlike the avant-garde film-making movement of the time — into which Clair was pulled because of the scandal caused by Entr'acte (a Dadaist short commissioned by Francis Picabia) — he was against the idea of "pure cinema" and experimental abstraction.

Although Clair fought against increasingly commercial pressures, he regarded cinema above all as a popular art that ought to forge its own identity by nurturing those elements that distinguished it from the other arts. Accordingly he paid very close attention to new technical developments and kept total control of his films at every stage. He was thus one of the first directors to impose the notion of the auteur.

Despite being celebrated as the French film-maker par excellence, Clair went into exile for more than 10 years, first in Britain, then in the United States. No one quite knows why. It may have had something to do with the resounding flop of Le Dernier Milliardaire (1934), a satirical film about a dictator in an imaginary country (Hitler had just come to power), in which Clair showed clear affinities with Chaplin.

He returned to France, but was immediately forced to flee to the US with his Jewish wife and son. In a sense they were responsible for his so-called "American period" — I Married A Witch (1942) and It Happened Tomorrow (1943) — which began the transition to the final period of film-making in France, which extended from Le Silence Est d'Or (1947) to Les Fêtes Galantes (1965).

The great merit of Billard's dazzling biography, which draws on a wide range of data, is that it puts Clair and his films into historical perspective and does not bother with such irrelevancies as the danger of his being forgotten. Far from being a commemorative book designed as a monument to its subject, it helps to create a complex and lively picture of one of the pioneers of French cinema by rescuing Clair from the menace of being typecast as an academic director.

(October 16)

The wave that took the world by storm

Jean-Michel Frodon

La Nouvelle Vague
by Michel Marie
Nathan 128pp 49 francs

La Nouvelle Vague
by Antoine de Baecque
Flammarion 160pp 149 francs

Nouvelle Vague
by Jean Douchet
Cinémathèque Française/Hazan
358pp 495 francs

FAIRLY few books have been devoted to the French Nouvelle Vague (New Wave), which was both an important artistic movement in the history of world cinema, and a remarkable social-historical episode in French history. That gap has now largely been filled by three books which have been published almost simultaneously and which make a useful contribution to research on the subject.

Although on the same topic and sharing almost identical titles, the three books have very different aims and, after briefly looking into the question of how you define the New Wave, each comes to a different conclusion.

But all three take two things for granted. The first — which many would dispute — is that the New Wave was a shortlived but intense movement, which was over by the mid-sixties at the latest. The other — on which most people agree — is that New Wave had a considerable influence on the cinema, both geographically and over a period of time. Each book lists the major foreign and French directors who were influenced by the movement.

La Nouvelle Vague, by Michel Marie, who is a professor in cinema studies at Paris-III University, has been published by Nathan in its "128" series. It perfectly fulfils the aim of that series, which is to summarise a topic clearly and succinctly in a slender — and inexpensive — volume aimed mainly at students who are not necessarily familiar with the topic. It would be difficult, within those constraints, to make a better job of such a wide-ranging subject than Marie has done.

Antoine de Baecque's La Nouvelle Vague offers other attractions. The first in a series called "Générations", it aims to be a work of historical sociology. It has more in common with the Anglo-American school of "cultural studies" than with the French tradition of aesthetically-based criticism.

The text itself — the work of a film historian and editor of Cahiers du Cinéma who has already written a great deal on the subject — gives pride of place to the social phenomenon that occurred when Les 400 Coups, Le Beau Serge and A Bout de Souffle took cinemas by storm. But the fact that an equal number of pages in the book are devoted to photographs (many of them excellent, some little known or unpublished) tends to raise it to the level of a "mythology", in the Barthesian sense, of the New Wave.

The third new book on the New Wave is by Jean Douchet, a critic, historian, lecturer and film-maker. In it, he deliberately casts himself as one of the protagonists of the phenomenon he describes. Although the dust-jacket shows the blue-painted face of Jean-Paul Belmondo at the end of Pierrot Le Fou, the book itself consists chiefly of personal reminiscences — Douchet was one of the co-directors of Paris Vu Par . . . (1965), a curious kind of New Wave manifesto filmed *after* the New Wave had taken place.

The book disconcerts as soon as you open it. Its layout is sometimes admirable and sometimes appalling; it mixes up narrative genres, shifting without warning from a scholarly to a confidential tone; it suddenly gets bogged down in a welter of dictionary entries or reproductions of contemporary documents; there are occasionally gaping holes in the middle of an explanation; there is inventive, but sometimes childish, word-play on the relationship between text and image.

Jean Douchet's book mocks the film buffs who think they are more important than the films themselves

We eventually understand what Douchet is trying to do: his book is not called La Nouvelle Vague like the other two; it is not a document "on" a phenomenon. It is called simply Nouvelle Vague, like Richard Anthony's song or Jean-Luc Godard's film with Alain Delon. In other words, it is itself a "New Wave" object, founded on the same prejudices, audacities, critical vendettas and witticisms as the first films by French film-makers such as Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut and Godard.

One thing that distinguished the iconoclastic inventors of the *politique des auteurs* was their demand that they should be allowed to make films in the first person singular. That is precisely what Douchet does when he uses his own experience as a starting point for his narrative.

His book vividly recreates the sudden emergence of the New Wave at the end of the fifties, which was the culmination of a long and meandering process that had begun before the war. To back up his argument, he draws a distinction between leading New Wave figures born in the twenties, and their younger colleagues born in the following decade.

Interesting though his approach may be, it achieves little because he fails to explain clearly enough what the term New Wave means. It was invented by the weekly L'Express in 1957 and referred to the new mores of the younger generation in France. It was applied to the cinema for the first time by Pierre Billard the following year.

The term was used rather vaguely to start with — which suited everyone, especially the directors who had initially worked on the magazine Cahiers du Cinéma (its December 1962 issue drew up a list of 162 "New Wave" directors).

New Wave now refers to a much smaller category of films, and is used only to described those which were directed by Cahiers du Cinéma critics and their immediate friends.

They were all born in the thirties except for Eric Rohmer, and he has none of the characteristics that Douchet detects in other directors born in the twenties, who also played their part in the New Wave revolution. Film-makers such as Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Agnès Varda and Alexandre Astruc, and the film theorist André Bazin, had a different relationship with the cinema and society. They were more explicitly committed to left-wing political ideas.

A much broader notion of modernity (which is not to be found in any of these three books) needs to be brought to bear if the New Wave is to be properly assessed and given its place in French history as well as in the history of art.

Douchet is not interested in such historical rigour. His book freewheels playfully along, mocking the university lecturers who monopolise film studies and the film buffs who believe they are more important than the films themselves.

He is more interested in showing how closely involved he himself was in the New Wave's intellectual and aesthetic adventure than in drawing an exhaustive or even coherent picture of the phenomenon. He revels in anti-academicism with infectious delight.

So did the New Wave die in 1962 or in 1965? This free-spirited book — like many films being made today — suggests on the contrary that it remains very much alive in one guise or another.

(November 20)

MBAs used to be seen as qualifications for the academically challenged, but all that has changed, says **Nick Pandya**

Doing business with the masters

THERE was a time when studying business at university meant taking a course which was a cocktail of subjects such as marketing, accountancy, law, statistics, psychology, management and so on; a perfect mixture, it was thought, for someone who would rather not tackle the more arduous academic subjects.

By the same token, people working in the commercial divisions of a company were usually graduates of a totally unrelated discipline, who acquired skills on the job.

Today people with a degree in arts or the sciences, who want to move into business, are faced with a problem. Some may be lucky enough to find a broad-minded employer who accepts that their qualifications in anthropology or history may ultimately assist them in selling clothes or cars. But for most, a postgraduate business degree is a pre-requisite for a career in business.

The premium placed on business studies courses reflects how far they have evolved in recent years. Today they are every bit as demanding as courses in other disciplines, and graduates with business qualifications are highly sought after. Most MBA (Master of Business Administration) programmes teach you about business using case studies. The objective is to hone your practical skills rather than provide you with an abstract knowledge base. In Britain the success of business studies has been borne out by polls of employers' preferred educational institutions. These tend to be universities such as Birmingham, Bath, Warwick, Manchester and Aston — all of which are well-known for their business studies courses.

With the European single currency less than a month away, and an increasingly globalised economy, potential MBA students would be well advised to choose a course with an international dimension. The Coventry Business School, for example, runs an MBA in International Business, which is designed to impart a "holistic" view of business, by exploring British, European, American and Far Eastern approaches to business and management studies.

If that's a little too broad, several institutions offer MBAs in European business or management studies. Coventry offers an MBA in European Business in association with the Université de Caen in France, while the the Oxford-based EAP European School of Management offers a European Masters in Management. The latter course, which runs for three years and is taught in three countries, is an international postgraduate programme leading to an award of the French Diplôme de Grande Ecole and the German Diplom Kaufmann/Kauffrau.

Toasting a successful day at the office: but you are unlikely to get a foot in the door without an MBA

Places on MBA courses are not open to all graduates. Entrance requirements are high and rising to cope with demand for places — ratios of 20 applicants to each place are common. A prospective student should consider the following factors: size and culture, programme content, quality of faculty and student body, facilities, location, internationalism, administrative efficiency, success and failure rates, career services and placement fees, entrance criteria and reputation among employers.

These factors are discussed in the official MBA handbook, Guide To Business Schools, which is published annually by the Association of MBAs.

The guide gives essential advice on various schools and programmes. The Association has also developed StudyLink MBA which is the official source of information to MBA study, available on both interactive multimedia CD-ROM and the association's website.

The United States has a league table of business schools. No such table yet exists in Europe. However, the process of accreditation carried out by the Association of MBAs for more than 25 years does offer clear guidance to intending students.

To contact the Association of MBAs, telephone: (+44) (0)171 837 3375, or check out its website: http://www.mba.org.uk

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For further details on the innovative design and development of the new campus please view the relevant University web pages at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/estate/nc.html.



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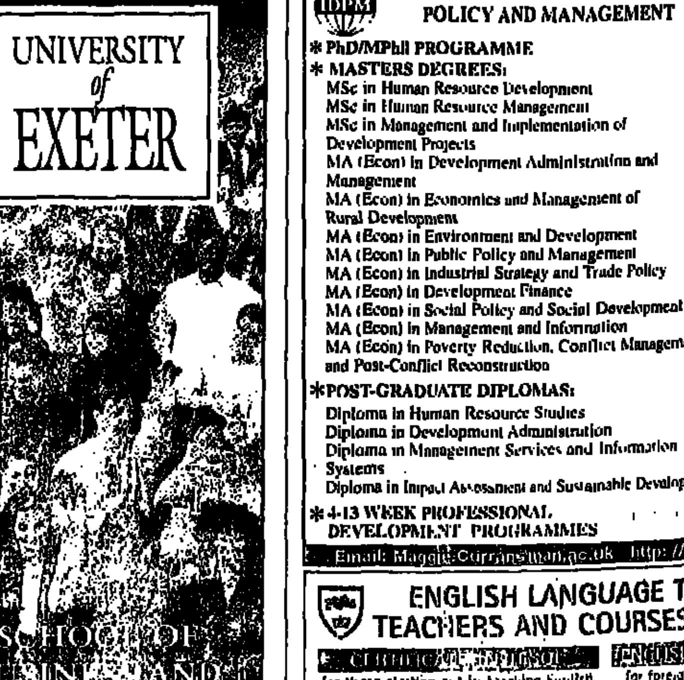
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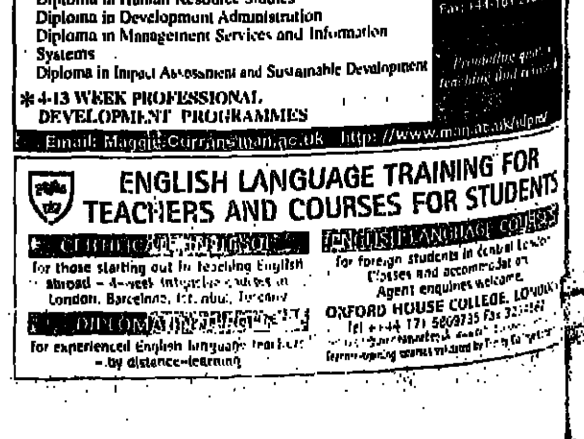
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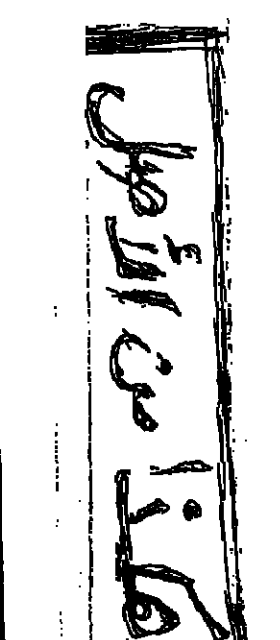
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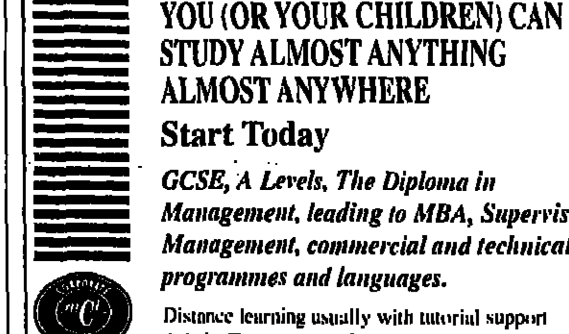
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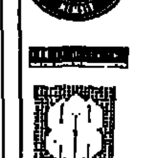


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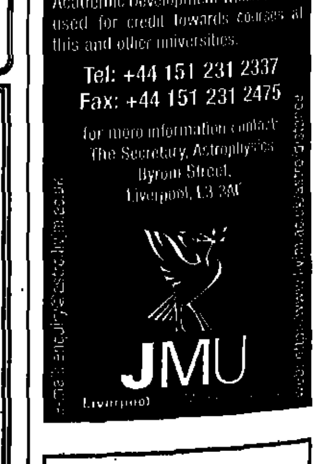
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Further details and application forms are available from Helen Drozdzewski, Personnel Advisory Group, Medical Research Council, 20 Park Crescent, London W1N 4AL.

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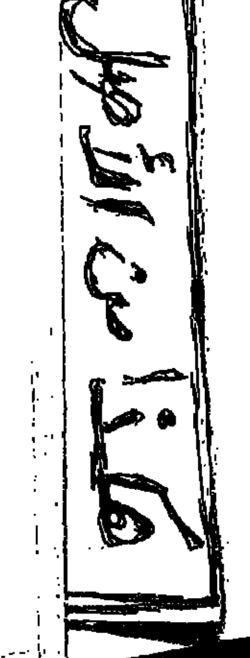
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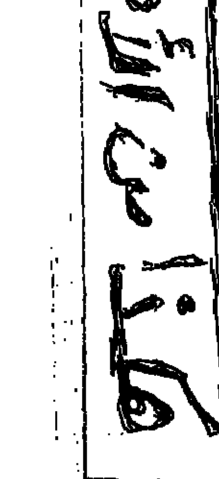


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Sowing the seeds of a new revolution

The battle to keep our genes from becoming another capitalist commodity will be the most significant struggle of our age, writes **Jeremy Rifkin** (left)



WE ARE in the midst of an historic transition from the Industrial Age to the Biotech Century. Molecular biologists are mapping the genomes of many of the Earth's creatures, from the lowliest bacteria to human beings, creating a vast genetic library for commercial exploitation.

Gene technology is already being used in a variety of fields — including agriculture and medicine — to fashion a bio-industrial world. After thousands of years of adapting inanimate matter to create useful things we are now modifying living material to make commercial goods.

The global life science companies are quickly manoeuvring to exert their influence and control over the new genetic commerce. Typical of the trend is the bold decision by chemical giants such as Monsanto, Novartis, Hoechst and DuPont to spin off or sell their chemical divisions and anchor their research, development and marketing in biotech-based technologies and products.

At the heart of any discussion of the new genetic commerce is the issue of patenting the genetic blueprints of millions of years of evolution. The forces that control these genetic resources will exercise tremendous power over the world economy in the future.

Multinational corporations are already scouting the continents, hoping to locate microbes, plants, animals, and humans with rare genetic traits that might have future market potential which they can patent as their new "inventions". The financial rewards of successful bio-prospecting are likely to be significant. Already patents have been awarded for a genetically engineered sweet protein derived from a West African plant called thaumatin. The thaumatin plant protein is 100,000 times sweeter than sugar, making it the sweetest substance on Earth. With the market for low-calorie sweeteners nearing $1 billion a year in the US alone, thaumatin is likely to become a cash cow.

Extending patents to life raises the important legal question of whether engineered genes, cells, tissues, organs and whole organisms, are truly human inventions or merely discoveries of nature that have been skillfully modified. In order to qualify as a patented invention in most countries, the inventor must prove that the object is novel, non-obvious, and useful.

But even if something fulfils these criteria, if it is a discovery of nature it is not an invention and, therefore, not patentable. For this reason, the discovery of chemical elements in the periodic table, while unique, non-obvious when first isolated and purified, and very useful, were none the less not considered patentable as they were discoveries of nature, even though some degree of human ingenuity went into isolating and classifying them.

The United States Patent Office (PTO) has said, however, that the isolation and classification of a gene's properties and purposes is sufficient to claim it as an invention.

The prevailing logic becomes even more strained when consideration turns to patenting a cell, or a genetically modified organ, or a whole animal. Is a kidney patentable simply because it has been subjected to a slight genetic modification? What about chimpanzees, who share 99 per cent of our genetic makeup? Should they qualify as human inventions if researchers insert a single gene into their biological makeup? The answer from the patent office is, yes.

Corporate efforts to turn genes into a commodity are meeting strong resistance from a growing number of non-governmental organisations and countries in the southern hemisphere, who are beginning to demand an equitable share of the fruits of the biotech revolution.

Southern countries claim that what northern companies call "inventions" are really the pirating of their local genetic resources and the accumulated indigenous knowledge of how to use them. The companies argue that patent protection is essential if they are to risk financial resources and years of research and development, bringing new and useful products to market.

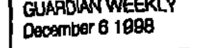
It is expected that within less than eight years, nearly all 60,000 or so genes that make up the genetic blueprints of the human race will have been identified and become the intellectual property of transnational life science companies. Transnational firms are also patenting human chromosomes, cells, tissues and organs. PPL, the company that cloned the sheep named Dolly, has applied for a patent that includes cloned human embryos as intellectual property.

The debate over life patents is one of the most important issues yet to face humans. Life patents strike at the core of our beliefs about the very nature of life and whether it is to be conceived of as having intrinsic, or mere utility value. The last great debate of this kind occurred in the 19th century over the issue of human slavery, with abolitionists arguing that every human being has "God-given rights" and cannot be made the personal commercial property of another human being.

Genetic activists are now beginning to argue that the world's gene pool should be maintained by international agreement as shared and open. If the genetic blueprints of millions of years of evolution are allowed to be reduced to intellectual property in the hands of governments or life science companies, future generations risk the very real possibility of "gene wars", just as past generations fought wars over fossil fuels, mineral and metals — the raw resources of the Industrial Age.

The battle to keep the Earth's gene pool free from the patent office and free of commercial exploitation is going to become one of the critical struggles of the Biotech Age.

Under US law, animals could be patented as human 'inventions' if their genetic code is changed



Letter from São Paulo Fran Weaver

The white side of the tracks

ALPHAVILLE is not, as the name might suggest, some futuristic cybercity or a colony on the moon, but a thriving commercial centre and exclusive residential suburb just outside the immense and chaotic Brazilian city of São Paulo. More than 30,000 people live in Alphaville, mainly in 12 large residential condominium estates, each surrounded by insurmountable concrete walls.

Within these walls, in private havens of tranquility and greenery, residents enjoy a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption without fear of the crime and violence that afflict the city outside. Uniformed security men patrol the streets in case any suspicious strangers manage to get over the wall, or past the scrutiny of the heavily armed guards at the condominium entrances.

The uninhibited designs of the large detached houses reflect a wide variety of tastes, ranging from colonial ranches through Taj Mahal-style oriental palaces to Swiss cottages with steeply sloping roofs, regardless of the lack of snow on the Tropic of Capricorn. The lush tropical gardens are immaculately kept, and the streets are regularly hosed down. In less affluent districts nearby residents can go for days without water.

Drivers rule in Alphaville: there are few pavements and no traffic lights. The flow of traffic is restrained by roundabouts with enigmatic right-of-way rules, hundreds of chassis-crunching speed humps, ramps, chicanes and loops, like a giant Scalextric set. It works somehow, as long as you are not foolish enough to try to walk anywhere. Alphaville's residents prefer to drive, despite frequent motorway gridlock in São Paulo. The idea of a walk in the forest beyond the last condominium attracts incredulous stares from the neighbours, as do inquiries about the bus service into São Paulo, which is regularly held up by latterday highwaymen.

Every morning an army of maids, nannies, cleaners and gardeners manages to arrive by bus and form long queues outside the condominium entrances, waiting to show their passes, or be identified via the closed-circuit TV system linked to every home. Most of these workers are dark-skinned, while Alphaville residents are of fairly undiluted European stock. Brazil deserves its reputation as a melting pot, but colour is still clearly linked with class. A sort of informal apartheid seems to operate, as a black American acquaintance, tired of being mistaken for a cleaner or a nanny at social events, complains.

Eliete Santana, who cleans our house in Alphaville, moved to São Paulo about 20 years ago from the rural Northeast. She lives with her family of 10 in nearby Carapicuiba, now part of São Paulo's sprawling periphery of countless ramshackle brick homes stretching endlessly into the hazy smog. It is just a couple of kilometres from Alphaville, but another world. The muddy streets are full of uncollected rubbish, and scavenging dogs and hens forage in pools of foul water in the gutters. Heavy rain can turn the area into a morass, with homes often destroyed in landslides. Eliete's house has bare cement walls and floors with a few mats, a couple of cupboards, a toilet, a sink, a fridge and a gas cooker but, unusually for Brazil, no TV. Everything, including the children, is well-kept and neat.

There is a strong feeling of culture shock moving between these two worlds, but the domestic staff who come into Alphaville every day say they enjoy working in pleasant surroundings and get reasonable wages by local standards. But the treatment they receive from their employers and the security guards, such as the thorough bag-searches on the way out of the condominiums, can be humiliating.

In Alphaville it is common to see women, fully made-up, with bleached hair and dark glasses, exercising their dogs by driving around the suburb in their expensive foreign cars, holding the dog's lead out of the car window with a freshly manicured hand. The posh ladies of Alphaville are known jokingly to their maids and cleaners as *peruas* — old female turkeys.

The affluent residents seem to be able to come to terms with the proximity of poverty by either blaming the poor themselves, or, more commonly, ignoring the issue. They preoccupy themselves with other issues that affect them more directly, though many of these, such as the crime and violence that have driven them into their walled-in ghettoes, have their roots in poverty.

It is easy to be critical of the concept of Alphaville, but for its residents the comfort and security it offers are a godsend.

In a way, it is a microcosm of the way humanity is divided on a global scale, and it could, more ominously, be portentous of how the better-off will increasingly choose or be forced to live in many cities in the future.

Notes & Queries

Joseph Harker

Smelling a rat . . . metaphor folklore, ballad or merely a bad odour?

WHY do we "smell a rat" when we think something is amiss?

THE saying dates back at least to the 1530s. A manuscript ballad dated 1533 includes the line "For if they smell a rate". In 1607 the Lincolnshire actor-playwright Thomas Keywood wrote in A Woman Kilde With Kindnesse: "Now you talk of a cat, Sisley, I smell a rat", which illustrates the most likely origin — that of a cat smelling a rat while unable to see it. — *Arthur Clifford, Southall, Middlesex*

WHY are rings (paedophile, drug) nasty, but circles (family, friends) nice?

THE sinister connotation of "ring", as applied to the stock market and politics, is rooted in mid-19th century America. Such usage was later extended to "crime rings" and "spy rings". It is safe to assume that drug and paedophile rings are more recent. Examples of "ring" referring to a group of people from before 1850 often involve hunting or military manoeuvres, implying hostile intent. While a circle may be open or closed, representing voluntary participation, the ring is a less permeable metaphor, evoking coercion. — *Philip Grew, Milan, Italy*

BEFORE global warming rose to the top of the environmental agenda, acid rain was often in the news. Has it got better or worse, or is it now the least of our worries?

ACID RAIN remains the same threat as it was when it was an 1980s' environmental buzzword. It has resulted in the deterioration of surface waters globally — my research found 75 per cent of the streams in the Lake District were extremely sensitive to acidification.

The stress exerted on this area by acid rain could cause declining fish populations, reduced biodiversity and lowered pHs in streams. A reduction in sulphur emissions has meant the streams affected by acid rain are slowly beginning to recover; however, with current emissions it will probably take a couple of centuries for the streams to return to their pre-acidification state.

Concern about acid rain continues to be a relevant issue in the scientific community because of an increase in nitrogen emissions, which might offset any improvements resulting from the decreased sulphur load. The questioner is correct: yesterday it was acid rain; today it is global warming; and who knows what tomorrow will bring? — *Gareth Thornton, Department of Earth Sciences, Open University, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire*

DUE to the recent torrential downpours, the acid contained in the rain has become diluted and no longer poses a serious threat to the environment. — *Richard Pike, Worthing, West Sussex*

WHAT determines the radius of the arc of a rainbow? It can't be constant, because double rainbows (one inside the other) are frequently seen in our area.

THE "circular rainbow" observed by Kate Wright while flying (November 28) was not a rainbow, but an optical phenomenon known as "The Glory". It results from internal reflection of light-rays within water droplets in clouds or fog banks, and appears 180 degrees from the light source (sun), forming a circular "halo" centred at the observer's head. — *David Josephy, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada*

HAS a fire station ever burned down?

I'M NOT sure about a fire station, but the crematorium that my father was to be cremated in had a serious fire a couple of days before the service. It was almost razed to the ground — I know my father would have seen the somewhat macabre humour in the situation! — *Charles Stuart, Arizona, USA*

WHEN I saw the burnt-out shell of the fire station in Apia, Samoa in 1991 (November 15) the enterprising fire crew was offering a car wash facility using the fire engine to raise money for a new station roof! — *Barry Evans, Brisbane, Australia*

HOW long should one wait in a traffic jam before turning off the engine?

I AM usually happy to leave such decisions to a more competent person — the bus driver. Have you considered not turning on the engine in the first place? — *Stephan Wehner, Vancouver, Canada*

IF A GOVERNMENT were elected which put the interests of the people before the interests of business, how would it be prevented from governing?

EXAMPLES of governments which have put the people first are Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua. So the answer should be obvious. — *John Orford, Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, Philippines*

Any answers?

DO MAGNETS work in space? If so, where do they point? — *Wanda Paluch, Montrose, Scotland*

IS THERE any word in the English language that rhymes with "orange?" — *Alex Xela, Rochester, USA*

TWENTY years ago I read that all the gold ever mined was equivalent to a cube of pure gold 18 metres each side. Was this estimate plausible then, and what size would the cube be today? — *Richard A'Brook, Carnoustie, Angus*

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A Country Diary

Janet Halliday

MALAYSIA: In the last century Ipoh was the heart of open-cast tin mining, and today the area is riddled with old mining pools. Some are still open water, used for duck farms or left to themselves and occasional fishermen; others, slowly silting up, are cloaked in lotus flowers and fringed with reeds. The oldest are marshes, muddy grass around the edges drowning among clumps of iris and carpets of vivid mauve water hyacinths in the quagmires in the middle.

We went birdwatching among some marshy pools, careful to walk only on the raised bunds between them. These drier margins support scrub, attracting passerines such as the yellow common iora, speckled Richard's pipit and spectacular blue-tailed bee-eaters. The bare branches of dead trees, and the telegraph wires that thread their way through the bogs are favoured by brown and long-tailed shrikes on the look-out for insects. There are pacific swallows ready to leave, a single iridescent black drongo punctuating the bright sunlight, and white-throated kingfishers, the white blazes on their chestnut breasts as startling as their brilliant blue backs.

In the wetter areas storm-grey purple herons and white cattle egrets abound. And among the water hyacinths are purple swamphens, walking on water with their broad-splayed red toes: magnificent birds like huge moorhens, whose skulking habits and rich indigo-purple plumage might hide them but for their eye-catching red foreheads and scarlet beaks.

The cattle egrets accompany grey water buffalo everywhere. The buffalo ignore us while we photograph them from the shade beneath a solitary tree; but as soon as we move off, they become pressingly inquisitive. They are large — so are their horns — and they have calves. We call it a day.

Grin and bear it

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

NAKED (BBC1), a series about the human body from youth to age, started in the middle. In every sense, really. The middle-aged body and the bulging stomach that goes with it, suggesting you have recently ingested a goat. Lucy Blakstad's calm camera came in so close that the naked body seemed monumental. Less like flesh than a phase of the moon, a curve of the earth.

As one middle-aged man, evidently Indian, said with dignity, "The weight of the stomach is not really good. The trousers fall down." The programme had developed a rather elegiac tone, but absolutely anything can be brightened by someone's trousers falling down.

Mike, still a bit of a lad at 50, and clearly the life and soul of any party, had noticed that middle-age spread goes all the way round, like a Teletubby. "You lay in your bath and you stick like a sucker to the bottom." I think he's got an octopus in there. The little devils get everywhere.

Like grey hair. "You get hair in your ears. You get grey hair in your nose! That's really not fair, is it? I even get grey hair in the nether regions. My belly's hanging over it most of the time, so I ignore that bit." As Mike said shyly (shyly for Mike), the trouble with a pendulous stomach is, it makes your willy look smaller. If your trousers fall down as well, you probably pray for death.

For centuries a stomach like a bay window was a sign of worldly success. It takes a lot of chicken dinners, as Shakespeare pointed out, to make a fair, round belly. Consider Fred Elliott of Coronation Street, currently raffling "a Christmas 'amper of rare and delicious comestibles". Fred is himself an 'amper. A solidly packed citizen, however you slice him. His stomach would once have been emphasised — measured, even — with a swooping loop of gold watch-chain. Hair would have sprouted from every orifice, each hair warmly welcome, until he was wreathed in crispy whiskers.

As it is, Mike wistfully watches his young neighbours leave in the morning for their dubious enterprises and envies them. "All slick reps in their Vectras and Mondeos and loads of dark hair and typical salesman 'taches. They look super in their suits. Slim devils." Mike, I noticed, left in his Porsche with a blonde. There are compensations.

There was a startling throwaway anecdote in **The Whirl of Vanity Fair** (Omnibus, BBC1). William Thackeray's wife — a woman whose portrait shows devastating Irish eyes — suffered, apparently, from post-natal depression. Thackeray took her home to Ireland. On the voyage she threw herself overboard. Now read on. "She would have died if the air had not kept her crinolines floating and she was observed over the back of the ship 20 minutes later by one of the other passengers. She was never the same again." It was extraordinarily difficult for Victorian women, however suicidal, to end it all. They floated from bridges like dandelion seeds. They bobbed along like ducks.

This programme seemed part of the determined effort to sell Becky Sharp as a woman for our time. So who should appear with a puff of smoke and a whiff of sulphur but Max Clifford? "With the right people behind her," said Clifford modestly, "Becky could easily become a very successful TV presenter and a household name in two or three years." He recommended a liaison with a star, a celebrity or the son of an ex-prime minister.

About now it became apparent Clifford had not read Vanity Fair and, like Mrs Thackeray, was increasingly at sea. We had reached the point where a modern Becky was opening her heart to the nation. Clifford said, "She reveals, 'I'm desperately upset because of my feelings for Lord Whatever-his-name-is . . .'" ("Lord Steyne," prompted the director.) "Steyne? Lord Steyne. But I've met this wonderful . . ." ("No. Her *husband's* Rawden. She has the *affair* with Lord Steyne.") "Oh, it's another lord? Oh, Christ! Well, they're probably gay if they're lords, aren't they?" Which throws a whole new light on Eng Lit, the House of Lords and just about everything.

Sentinel of the past . . . the American Air Museum at Duxford, Cambridgeshire PHOTO: GARRY WEASER

Salute to the cathedral of warrior ghosts

BOYS and their toys, eh? Sir Norman Foster and his team spent many happy hours toying with 1:72 scale Airfix kit warplanes as they resolved the form and plan of the superb American Air Museum in Britain at Duxford, *writes Jonathan Glancey*.

The Cambridgeshire museum, which opened last year to great acclaim, has won the Stirling Award for architecture.

As Sir Norman's great passion is flying, it should come as no surprise that the American Air Museum, devoted to a collection of magnificent warbirds clustered around a fearsome B-52 Stratofortress nuclear bomber, is one of his finest designs.

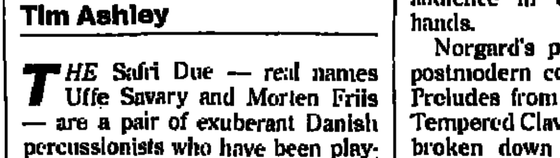
"Duxford", read the Stirling Prize citation, "is beautifully integrated into its flat landscape . . . an object of beauty, displaying its collection of warplanes well and dispassionately. It is one very simple idea — the great curving hangar — but replete with imagery, from ancient earthworks to the cockpit of a modern jet fighter."

The museum has since become a memorial to the thousands who died taking part in the US Army Air Force's mass daylight raids over occupied Europe between 1941 and 1945. Many were based in East Anglia. "As such", says the citation, "it has something of the hushed calm of a cathedral, its planes crewed by ghosts."

What it also possesses is a window bigger than any cathedral can boast overlooking the Duxford runway, along which US warplanes, old and new, can be seen taking off and landing as a salute to their retired siblings parked in Foster's hushed hangar.

Two claps of thunder

CLASSICAL MUSIC
Tim Ashley



THE Safri Duo — real names Uffe Savary and Morten Friis — are a pair of exuberant Danish percussionists who have been playing together since 1988 and who are destined, one suspects, for cult status. The cover of their new album shows them leaping wildly into the air with tailcoats flying. Slouching on to the platform at London's Royal Festival Hall to give the UK premiere of the album's title track — Per Norgard's Bach To The Future — with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Tadaaki Okata, they had the audience in the palms of their hands.

Norgard's piece is effectively a postmodern commentary on three Preludes from Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavier. The originals are broken down into their melodic, harmonic and rhythmic strata, then teasingly reconstructed. The arpeggios of the C Major Prelude are shuttled ethereally from xylophone to vibraphone and from one percussionist to the other until the orchestral brass intrude, first to throw them off key, then to force them into complex cross rhythms. The central turns the F Sharp Major Prelude into a ferocious duel for the two soloists, with steel-band sounds and bluesy riffs. In the final adagio the mood darkens to a formal elegy, into which the percussionists erupt with passages of Dionysiac fury.

When it was over, they asked if we wanted an encore, and offered us Steve Reich's Clapper Music, which consists simply of two performers clapping their hands in an endless variety of cross-rhythms. Then they announced that we were going to play part of it too — so we were divided into two teams and put through our paces as they shouted instructions from the platform. After that, they played the piece themselves, leading to excited cheers from a delighted public. This was showmanship at its best.

Cut to the chase

CINEMA
Xan Brooks

JACK FOLEY (George Clooney) and Karen Sisco (Jennifer Lopez) get acquainted during a leisurely late-night chat. The scene could be taking place in that comfortable lull after particularly good sex. There they are, nestled like spoons in the gloom. Jack has his hand on her thigh. The conversation is gentle, meandering. Except that Foley is an escaped bankrobber and Sisco the US Marshal he's taken hostage. The pair are lying in the trunk of a speeding getaway vehicle, brake-lights sporadically illuminating its cramped interior. When Foley gets out, Sisco promptly unloads her .38 through the closed boot after him. True romance, film-noir style.

Out Of Sight is full of such moments, such loopy scenarios, such riffs on the familiar. In steering its own idiosyncratic course, it conspires to be a heist thriller, a buddy-movie, a love-story, whatever it wants to be. Let's get the hyperbole out of the way first. Out Of Sight is the best movie Jennifer Lopez has ever made, the best movie George Clooney has ever made, the best movie Steven Soderbergh has ever made. Out Of Sight is so good it gives you goosebumps.

Culled from a book by Elmore Leonard, Soderbergh's film arrives with two obvious precedents in Get Shorty and Jackie Brown. So how does Soderbergh play Leonard? Does he go the Get Shorty route and style it as a brisk farce, or follow the Tarantino line of melancholic urban realism?

True to form, Soderbergh, a famously wayward talent, does neither, instead dreaming up a hip, romantic thriller that seems to be touched by the ghosts of It Happened One Night and North By Northwest. Out of Sight never disassociates itself from its forerunners. The film is produced by the same stable as Get Shorty, and hands out genial cameos to Jackie Brown stars Michael Keaton and Samuel Jackson. But it has a life that is all its own.

The film's nominal plotline revolves around a diamond heist: Foley, a career criminal, breaks out of prison and — alongside regular cohort Buddy Bragg (Ving Rhames) and spaced-out car-jacker Glenn Michaels (Steve Zahn) — hatches a scheme to rip off Albert Brooks's wig-wearing millionaire. Trouble is, Zahn has roped psychopathic Snoopy Miller (Don Cheadle) into the deal, the feds are hot on their trail and the safe turns out to contain toupees. All of which makes for spry, diverting stuff.

And yet the deeper we delve into Soderbergh's yarn, the more we realise that this diamond robbery is a secondary strand, an accompaniment. The real story unfurls out of that early car-boot scene and it is the awkward, undeniable attraction between Sisco and Foley, between cop and robber, hunter and hunted. The whole thing's so corny it verges on the embarrassing, so exquisitely rendered you can't help but be swept along.

The key is in the handling. Soderbergh's direction dances off an elegant script-job by Scott Frank. It dovetails into numerous flashbacks and fits together a cool jigsaw of rewinds, freeze-frames and zooms. Yet this is no cerebral exercise: Out Of Sight is funny, human and romantic as almighty hell.

Right from the start, Clooney is startling, his hair rumpled and greying, more black-Irish than ever. He is Cary Grant swarthy, with the same wry insouciance, the same effortless, unknowing charm. Moreover his ease seems to percolate through the entire cast.

BUT the true hero of the film is its director. At the age of 26, Steven Soderbergh was the smartest kid on the block, winning the 1989 Palme d'Or for his debut, sex, lies and videotape. After that, his talent became dissipated; his stock devalued by a series of ambitious flops (Kafka, King Of The Hill). Following the lacklustre response to his last mainstream release — The Underneath in 1995 — Soderbergh spoke openly of quitting the industry to make small Super-8 pictures with a gang of close friends.

Fast-forward three years and the man looks rejuvenated: back in the hunt with his most wholly formed and crowd-pleasing work to date. "This isn't going to end well," says Lopez, hunched scared and cold in the car-boot during those glittering opening moments. "These things never do." Except that Out Of Sight does end well, sustaining its jivey rhythm until the end credits then pulling away from the kerb towards a bright new tomorrow.



Come into the parlour, my dear

VISUAL ARTS
Adrian Searle

LOUISE BOURGEOIS will be 87 on Christmas Day. She could be just another batty old biddy, with her interminable reminiscences, her total recall and false memories, but for one irreducible fact: she is one of the fiercest and strongest artists alive. She is a sculptor, a draughtswoman, a teller of stories, an autobiographer, a kind of poet.

A selection of Bourgeois's recent work — just 10 sculptures and 10 drawings — has arrived at London's Serpentine Gallery (until January 30), on tour from Bordeaux, Lisbon, and Malmö in Sweden. Like her earlier exhibitions in Britain this is but a tantalising fragment of her life and art, yet her following among artists, and her fascination to those of a theoretical, psychoanalytical disposition, is enormous. She's both inimitable and highly influential. She makes her followers — I'd count Sarah Lucas and Mona Hatoum as typical — look like footnotes.

Age has not mellowed Bourgeois nor dimmed her talents. A deceptively impish old French lady in New York, her entire artistic life appears driven by violence, melancholy and personal pain. Her work is its exculpation, and often a cause of excruciating hilarity. There's something of the burlesque about it, but it is a comedy of anguish.

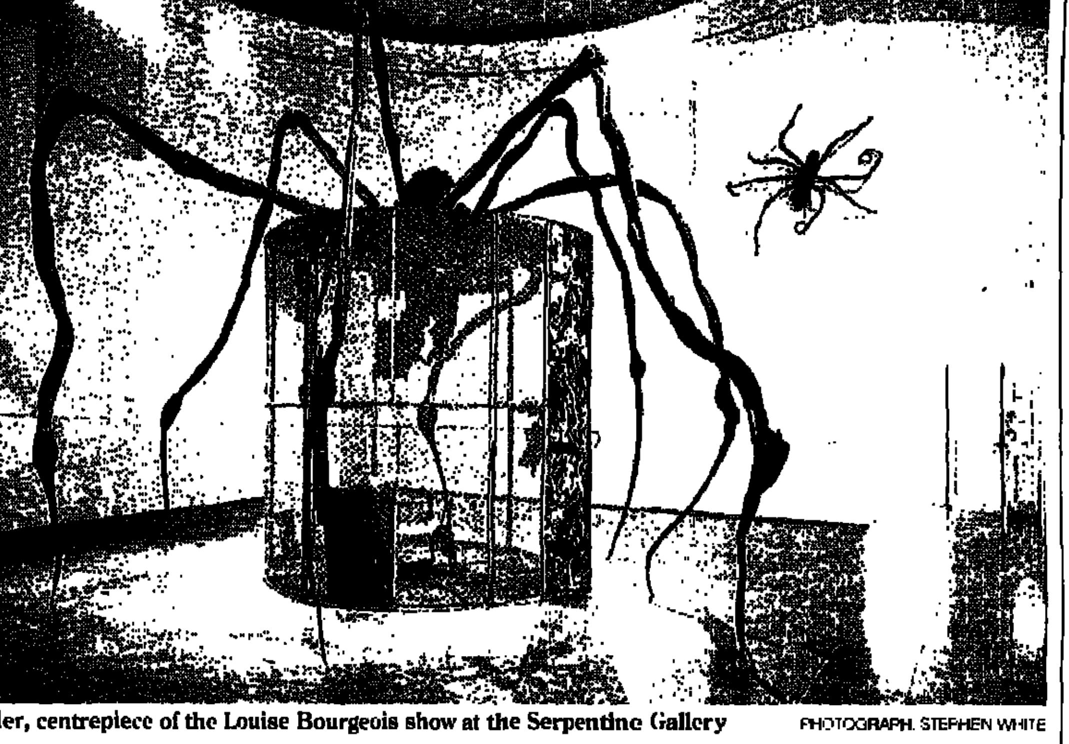
The spider is a recurrent image in Bourgeois's work: drawings of spiders; huge welded sculpted spiders; sag-bellied spiders with steel crustacean claws like giant dental probes. They have infested her work, not as some nightmarish manifestation of arachnophobia, but as a protective symbol, and as an amazing form full of life.

The spider is a weaver of webs, a symbol, perhaps, of the Bourgeois family trade, as repairers of old Gobelin tapestries. The spider is also the protecting mother. Bourgeois describes her own mother as "clever, patient, neat and useful as a spider. And as dangerous . . . The spider is a protector and a defence against evil."

Here's the spider, vast and implacable, rearing over a cage-like cell which contains nothing but an old chair with a sagging tapestry cover. Fragments of bone are also there, while a bottle of her favourite perfume (Guerlain's Shalimar) and a charm bracelet [illegible] chains in the cell. The little details in Bourgeois's works always seem important. They give her work a rich texture, a tantalising allusiveness. They hint at dark things, secrets, private voodoo, a monologue we can hear but can't decipher.

A smaller spider sits high on one wall in the dark. This sculptural *mise-en-scène*, Spider, from 1997, is the centrepiece of the Serpentine show. The door of the cage is ajar but you can't go in. All her work feels like this. You can look, but you can never touch. It is a world of phantom presences and impassable thresholds.

Bourgeois uses her life and her memories and her feelings as her material, carrying it all with her like the spider's hoard of embalmed flies, an old lady's trunk of souvenirs. Her art both unwraps it all, and gobbles it all up. She even uses her old clothes: dusty, gauzy see-through things.



Spider, centrepiece of the Louise Bourgeois show at the Serpentine Gallery PHOTOGRAPH: STEPHEN WHITE

Some of the garments have been sewn up and stuffed, turned into limbless pouched bags, punchbag sagging torsos, carnival horrorshow mannequins. A roomful of clothes is arranged in a cell-like chamber, corralled behind a circle of old doors. This, she has said, is not so much a conversation piece as a confrontation piece.

Such works ought to be obvious, too literal and horribly sentimentalising. The point is that these are Louise's clothes, which present the history of her identification with her own body. These are her flirtations with fashion, her vanities; gifts and things she'd saved for and coveted over the years. Clothes which would always remind her of other times, and especially of the fact that her parents would vie for her affections with gifts from the great Parisian couture houses.

The fact that Bourgeois didn't begin to have the recognition she merits till she was well into her 70s shouldn't trouble us. Her work has always come from inner necessity and personal obsession, a need for personal exorcism rather than from the career-culture of the contemporary art world, something Bourgeois probably wouldn't give a hoot about.

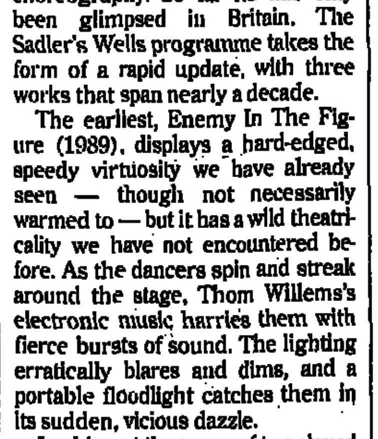
The current fixation with the next big thing, with fashion and fun and mindlessness, is, in its way, a defence against the fear of death, as well as the fear of seriousness, of profundity, of melancholy and the pain of memory and loss. Bourgeois is, like many old people, obsessed with youth too: her own youth, her own past. She is forever working through her childhood, her primal scenes, old betrayals. Her work might even be described as an act of revenge against the past. But she hasn't much time for the psychoanalysts or the analytically inclined theorists who would claim her. She knew Jacques Lacan and described him as a word-gargler.

Her work is nothing if not a form of self-analysis. Her sculptures — sometimes quite literally — unravel and disinter the remnants of her own past. And in the unravelling, she makes new complications, for herself and for us. Which is why her art is not about objects or shocks, but is a kind of language. Looking at her sculptures I hear voices in my head: Silly little Louise; Louise go and play; Shut up Louise and don't tell tales; Look what Daddy's bought you. And then it all gets too excruciating and I have to turn away. Only to turn back and look again.

Collective vision in an explosive world

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

FOR years William Forsythe has been waiting for a chance to show his dancers in London, and when Ballett Frankfurt finally made its British debut last week, we could see what we had been missing. The company boasts some exceptional dancers, but it also radiates the kind of collective inspiration found only in ensembles that perform one choreographer's style. The dancers' classical training forms the deep lines of their movement, yet the extremes of Forsythe's language are equally natural to them, from the explosions of corrosive energy to the subtlest flickerings of animation.



Alan Barnes and Antony Rizzi in Forsythe's Enemy In The Figure

Fine as these dancers are, British fans have been just as impatient to see their first evening of Forsythe's choreography. So far he has only been glimpsed in Britain. The Sadler's Wells programme takes the form of a rapid update, with three works that span nearly a decade.

The earliest, Enemy In The Figure (1989), displays a hard-edged, speedy virtuosity we have already seen — though not necessarily warmed to — but it has a wild theatricality we have not encountered before. As the dancers spin and streak around the stage, Thom Willems's electronic music harries them with fierce bursts of sound. The lighting erratically blares and dims, and a portable floodlight catches them in its sudden, vicious dazzle.

Looking at the game of tag played between dancers and light, you find yourself thinking about a world manipulated by the random glare of the media — individuals suddenly exposed in the spotlight, while others are left to flail in the shadows.

The most recent piece, Hypothetical Stream 2, is by contrast a steady continuum of pure movement with trios inspired by the art of Tiepolo. Their lyrical lines are frequently refracted into abrupt squibs and ripples of movement that make the dancers look as if they possess more joints than is feasible. This rich world of movement is totally self-sufficient, but even here we register the drama of serene transcendence being undercut by a jumpy, neurotic energy.

What gives Forsythe his peculiarly modern edge is that while his dance may be beautiful, virtuosic and sexy, it's not consoling. It's never an escape. This is most profoundly seen in his 1993 masterpiece Quintett set to Gavin Bryars's Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet.

Forsythe made this piece for his second wife as she was dying, and its five dancers move with a flaky energy that is simultaneously despairing, angry and loving. Three have a distinctly childish quality — teasing and clinging — while a woman dances among them as if launched on her own desperate, lonely destiny. She keeps trying to withdraw from the stage, while her partner keeps pushing her back. The vision of this "family" hanging on to life in the middle of the huge expanse of the Sadler's Wells stage is both bleak and wonderful. Forsythe's gift is to show us as heroes in an empty world.

Cabin fever in Quebec

THEATRE
Lyn Gardner

THE past is not another country but simply a facet of the present in Michel Tremblay's play *The House Among The Stars*, at the Orange Tree in Richmond, London, which focuses on three generations of the Quebec family that has featured in most of his drama and novels.

As the writer Jean Marc, his lover Mathieu and the latter's son walk into the old log cabin by the lake, the past walks out in the shape of Jean Marc's grandparents — Victoire and her brother Josaphat, who lived here at the beginning of the century until their incestuous union drove them out of paradise.

There is another generation clamouring to be let back into Eden, too: their illicit offspring, whose vacation at the log cabin in the 1950s only reminds them that the stars that shine on the city where they are exiled are not those reflected in the lake.

Tremblay's play is dense with themes of loss and redemption, the search for happiness, otherness, and the healing power of the imagination. It is all beautifully and minutely observed, but the delicacy might seem prissy, and the sense of stasis overwhelming, were it not for Dominic Hill's fantastic production. All sunlight and shadows, it combines precise, silken performances with the seductive revelry of a half-remembered dream.

In Aeschylus's 500-year-old Danaid Trilogy, of which only *Suppliants* survives, the 50 daughters of Danaus are so appalled at the prospect of marriage to their first cousins that they flee Egypt, only to be pursued by their would-be husbands, who have rape on their minds.

The rest of the trilogy is lost, but two years ago the Romanian director Silviu Purcarete pieced together some of the fragments to bring the savage story to its inevitable conclusion. Forced into marriage, all the sisters but one take their revenge by murdering their husbands on their wedding night.

Down at the tiny Gate theatre in west London, translator and director James Kerr makes do with a mere 15 suppliants, whom he moves about the chequered floor with delicate precision, as if they were chess pieces. Of course they are pawns in more ways than one. The result is much more small-scale but also much more human. Kerr creates a production of simple, ethereal beauty that bears witness to the plight of refugees everywhere.

Woman With Coffee (detail) by Matisse, a revolutionary who wanted no more than a comfortable armchair

A very ordinary genius

A S Byatt

The Unknown Matisse: Volume 1,
by Hilary Spurling
Hamish Hamilton 480pp £25.00

PASSIONATE admirers of Matisse may feel he is less in need of a detailed biography than most artists. His world is a world of Platonic forms, of the perfected exploration of the relations of colours and spaces, frames and shapes. His art was revolutionary, and revolutions are temporal matters, taking place in whole cultures. But with him, more than with anyone else, our experience is of a timeless and abstracted ordering.

Peter Everett's recent novel, Matisse's War, dramatises the paradox of his search for serenity and joy during the German occupation of France, his wife's and daughter's imprisonment, his own grave illness. It depicts a ruthless perfectionism which is at once heroism and indifference. Even here, the reader's curiosity is not personal, but moral, a matter of principle.

Hilary Spurling brings a British passion for idiosyncratic details to the Cartesian French cultural world of distinct ideas, aesthetic movements, agreed values. Matisse's world is not her world — she had to learn her French on the job — and she does not bring to Matisse the instinctive sympathy that is such a delight in her life of Ivy Compton-Burnett.

But she does bring a relentless curiosity, a scholarly patience, and a brilliant narrative skill to her work, and her account of Matisse's first 40 years is gripping, full of shocks and colour, judicious and informative.

The son of a seed-merchant, Matisse was born in Picardy, the flat French north bordering on Flanders, in country fought over in successive wars.

Spurling describes his move to Paris, his relationship with the model, Camille, mother of his daughter, Marguerite, and his marriage to Amélie Parayre with precise imagination — her descriptions of Parisian studio life interrupted by childish illnesses show both the strain of family life and Matisse's genuine devotion to his families.

Spurling's first volume ends when Matisse was 40, established as a force in modern art, changing our perception of colour and form for ever. Her tale has never been less than fascinating, her account of divisionism, the Fauves, Matisse's interest in Giotto and Algerian rugs never less than helpful. She has quoted Matisse liberally, and there is always a slight shock when his own words appear, for he remains less real than all the lively, intriguing people who surround him.

This in a way is as it should be. He once wrote that he was married to his work table and could never move far from it. Spurling ends by quoting his "Notes of a Painter", written in answer to "the Sar" Péladan, who sneered at the Fauves for calling themselves "wild" and "wearing conventional dark suits like so many department store footwalkers." Matisse had defended himself against these charges to an American by saying, "Please tell the Americans that I am a normal man; I am a devoted husband and father, I have three beautiful children; I go to the theatre, go riding, have a comfortable house, a beautiful garden I love, flowers etc exactly like everyone else." His mystery resides partly in this resolute "normality". What he wanted, he said, was a pure, tranquil, balanced art which should soothe and calm like a good armchair.

As Spurling says, he had lived through enough stress to know the value of a good armchair. But there is nevertheless something daunting — and perhaps unavoidably absent from this rich biography — about the intensity of his concentration on the pleasures of the mind and of the senses. He was not normal. He was at some extreme of human exploration. He called his art an expression of "the so-to-speak religious feeling [sentiment] I have about life". The essential Matisse is contemplative. Hilary Spurling has written a marvellous account of everything else around him.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £20 contact CultureShop (see below)

A bullet for the patient

Bob Granleese

Triage
by Scott Anderson
Macmillan 235pp £16.99

IT'S ALL part of the book-buying game: enter shop, see novel by unknown author, read dust-jacket — the plaudits thereon can make all the difference. Pick up Scott Anderson's debut novel, however, and the sleeve notes are more likely to make you hastily put it back on the shelf than rush to the till: "Already being compared with The English Patient," it proclaims. Whatever else Triage may be, it is thankfully no Ondaatje Mark II, suffering none of that novel's lumbering literary aspirations and instead going quietly about its business of telling a story well. Anderson, a war reporter by trade, crafts a disturbing account of the contradictory effects of war on the human mind. That he does so in such a convincing and unobtrusive manner is testimony to his skills as a writer.

The plot revolves around the attempts of Mark Walsh, a war photographer, to come to terms with his part in the disappearance of a colleague in Kurdistan. Walsh, injured by mortar fire in the opening passage, is treated by a doctor, who, like so much in this slight but substantial work, is not all he seems. The medic has so many injured in his care that he arbitrarily chooses which patients will live and which will die — if the latter, he has them shot.

Only gradually does it dawn, on both Walsh and the reader, that this approach, brutal as it may be, is the result of a good man doing his best in impossible circumstances. It could almost stand as the book's motif. Walsh survives, and returns to New York, where his mental condition deteriorates, despite the efforts of his Spanish lover, Elena. She also has some experience of war, not only through her work with the UN, but also through her grandfather, from whom she has been estranged since adolescence, after finding out that he committed war crimes when working as a psychiatrist in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. At which point, the grandfather re-enters her life — and blithely begins using his old techniques on Walsh.

If that sounds a little glib and convenient, the ends more than justify the means, and the whole is held together with taut, almost bare writing that fits the subject like a balaclava.

Thrillers

Chris Petit

Nick's Trip, by George P Pelecanos (Serpent's Tail, £7.99)

WASHINGTON film production man Pelecanos moonlights effectively with local DC thrillers featuring private eye Nick Stefanos whose cases are less to do with crime solutions than bad company kept, and drink and dope downed along the way. Few do benders as well, and here there are plenty to choose from, with Pelecanos excelling at the tinselly allure of cheap bars, juke-box memories and the next day's regrets. One of the oldest plots going — former best buddy appears out of nowhere to hire Stefanos to find the missing wife — is given the make-over and turned into a lament for time lost. The big love affair is, as always, with Washington DC, realised with real affection and skill. Recommended.

Time to Hunt, by Stephen Hunter (Century, £15.99)

FILM critic Stephen Hunter, also from Washington, moonlights with sniper thrillers, featuring Arkansas sharpshooter Bob Swagger, here forced to relive Vietnam nightmares: why should Swagger's old Russian nemesis renew his vendetta 25 years on? This was the book seen recently under Clinton's arm, proof that when it comes to thrillers he has better taste than his predecessor but one. That said, this is not a patch on Hunter's last, Black Light, whose tight, on-the-spot investigation is replaced by a sprawling narrative covering three decades, starting with seventies radicalism and Vietnam, and ending in the realms of the far-fetched. While the field craft of the sniping set pieces is up to scratch, the writing elsewhere shows signs of haste, and feats of *Übermensch* endurance pall. For pace and tension Household's Rogue Male still remains — 60 years on — the sniping thriller to beat.

Los Alamos, by Joseph Kanon (Abacus, £5.99)

A MURDER investigation cannily set during the final stages of the making of the atomic bomb, Kanon's story is less to do with the impending cataclysm than a sly tracing of hidden continuities, particularly the overlaps between fascism, democracy and communism. Written as a cool exercise in American paranoia, its neat equation reveals that the obsessive secrecy and security surrounding the Bomb is about to equal rampant insecurity and cold-war hysteria. Betrayal is a given, and demonstrated by the central affair between investigator and exotic English adulteress like some one out of Barbara Skelton. Brainy, with atmospheric desert locations.

Diary of a sycophant

A N Wilson

The Journals of Woodrow Wyatt, Volume One: Confessions of an Optimist
edited by Sarah Curtis
Weidenfeld 748pp £25

WOODROW Wyatt, the News of the Screws pundit, Chairman of the Tote, and for 20 years a Labour MP, was only a "famous" figure in a Lilliputian London circle. He was dismayed — this diary tells us — that his Memoirs (Confessions Of An Optimist) "had an almost entirely London sale, hardly anybody bought it north of Watford". This fact might have made him revise his estimation of himself in the scheme of things.

He was a jolly man, and, like many lefties, he enjoyed high life, good wine, womanising and going to the races. He seemed the walking embodiment of the truth that buffoonery is an essential ingredient in the middle-class social climber's armoury. His pseudo-Churchillian voice, absurd bow-ties and Edwardian raffishness all seemed, and were, the most ridiculous act. No doubt they amused the Royals, ducal families and newspaper proprietors among whom this genial rove, somewhat mysteriously, chose to spend his time.

Why anyone should want to spend so much time among people stratospherically richer, and stupider, than himself, is a mystery, alas, which these rather feeble diaries do not answer. For what you discover, early on, is a terribly depressing fact: namely that Woodrow took himself seriously. During the weekly telephone calls to Margaret Thatcher he seemed to do nothing except flatter her ego. But from the diarist's Walter-Mitty point of view these are conversations of immense significance. He believes that he is directing events, rather than providing a sycophantic commentary upon them: "A long talk with Mrs T. Congratulate her on yesterday's robust speech" . . . etc. The blurb on this book promises "a contemporary Pepys". Instead you get: "I once more urged on her that she should try to make the privatisation of gas much more competitive within itself than British Telecom had been."

Social climber . . . Wyatt was a great admirer of Margaret Thatcher

The political interest of the book is nil. Woodrow was a potentially clever man who sold his soul to the devil, aka Rupert Murdoch, and had no influence on the really rather ghastly politicians whom he chose to cultivate.

Kindly about Thatcher and the Queen Mother, with whom he became friends while chairman of the Tote, Woodrow is a complete bitch about almost everyone else, "shopping" his aristocratic friends for their marital infidelities, their alcoholic excesses and their greed. To judge from these prolix pages — more than 700 of them — this jolly old chap never made, and seldom heard, an amusing remark. There is only one funny joke, and it is made by the Duke of Devonshire. For the most part, the pages are a vulgar catalogue of how much things must have cost his various hosts and friends. Fine vintages, cars, houses, women, even the first editions signed for him by Kingsley Amis, are relentlessly costed. So, too, are his wife and daughter.

It was always in the discrepancy between the effects he hoped to achieve and the impression he actually gave that Woodrow's charm lay. He was a funny, and delightful companion. Truly. But you wouldn't guess it from these pages. The dismaying revelation is that he was genuinely impressed by money and rank for their own sake, that he was almost completely philistine; and that in his adulation for Mrs Thatcher he lost not merely his judgment but also his humour.

At another point in the tale, "Debo Devonshire gave me a false smile and a false kiss and put her arm round me saying, 'Uncle Woodrow' in a loud voice. I felt how much she didn't like me." By now the readers find themselves in the unlikely position of knowing what it feels like to be the Duchess of Devonshire.

The first lady of Eden

Natasha Fairweather

The Story of Eve
by Pamela Norris
Picador 497pp £20

THE HISTORY of human society might have followed a rather different course if the theologians of both the Jewish and the Christian faiths had focused more on the Bible's egalitarian first account of the creation of the world, rather than its opposing and divisive second one. For chapter one of Genesis has an all-powerful creator fashioning the world, along with man and woman ("In the image of God created He him: male and female created He them") in six days, and bidding all his progeny to "be fruitful and multiply". Chapter two tells the complex, contradictory story of original sin and Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden by an inscrutable deity who operates on a far more human scale.

Prejudice against Eve, whose frailty, curiosity and disobedience led her to eat the forbidden fruit and open the biblical gateway to human suffering, has profoundly influenced the perception and treatment of women in Judaeo-Christian society ever since. And it is this long-term cultural effect of the story of Eve which Pamela Norris examines in her dense and wide-ranging history.

Norris reminds us that monotheism's greatest challenge was to explain death and human suffering. For, if an omnipotent deity had created everything on Earth, why should human life begin and end with pain? Norris draws on an impressive range of texts to demonstrate how a variety of different and often contradictory ideas fed into the story of Eve — from the Pandora and Psyche myths of the classical era, to the medical treatises of late antiquity, with their bizarre theories about menstruation, the process of conception and the fleshiness of women; from the formation of Jewish law in the Talmudic era with its focus on regulating the reproductive functions of women, to the early Christian association of women with base, uncontrolled carnality. And she goes on to explore how Eve's legacy was developed and expressed in art and literature throughout the ages.

Norris is particularly astute at tracing the evolution of the early Christian cult of virginity and sexual abstinence. The fact that Christianity venerated the Virgin Mary as its supreme image of motherhood is an enduring source of irony, providing women with an inimitable role model. And the strongest section of the book provides a close textual analysis of the writings of St Paul and St Augustine, among others. Norris examines how the early Church's squeamishness about female sexuality often polarised around the idealised figure of Mary and the demonised Eve.

LESS SUCCESSFUL is the second section of the book that draws on a huge variety of texts from Beowulf, Chaucer and Milton, to Helen Dunmore, Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter to explore how ideas about Eve have expressed themselves in literature. Burdened by a mass of material, Norris resorts simply to recounting the plot of book after book in tedious detail.

From the moment that Adam was given the power of naming all of creation (giving Eve a Hebrew name which is thought to mean "giver of life", but is also linked to the Aramaic and Arabic words for "snake"), language has been in the male domain. The Story Of Eve is a small step towards Eve reclaiming her own story.

Taking the queer path to human liberation

Paul Burston

Love Undetectable
by Andrew Sullivan
Chatto & Windus 272pp £9.99

IN THE first of the three extended essays that make up this book, the author makes a startling confession. Recalling the day in 1993 when he was diagnosed as HIV-positive, Sullivan admits that he instinctively interpreted the diagnosis as some kind of retribution. In hindsight, he acknowledges that he hadn't succeeded in banishing the stigma and guilt associated with being homosexual, that deep down he still "loathed and feared an inextricable part of who I was".

It's a brave thing to admit, especially for a man in Sullivan's position. An "out" gay Catholic and former editor of the American right-wing journal The New Republic, whose previous book Virtually Normal called for gay men and women to embrace the institution of marriage, Sullivan has been condemned as a "gay conservative" by many in the gay rights movement. Doubtless there are some cheerleading gay critics out there who will leap gleefully upon the news that he is not an entirely happy homosexual, insisting that this somehow disqualifies anything he has to say.

This would be a great shame because Love Undetectable is a remarkable book. The first essay, "When Plagues End", assesses the impact of combination drug therapy on people with HIV, and its emotional and psychological implications for the gay world at large. Thanks to recent medical breakthroughs, people who only a few years ago were busy preparing themselves for death are now faced with the challenge of living. Drawing on his own experiences, and those of his friends, Sullivan describes the combination of relief, elation and guilt that comes with being a survivor when so many have died.

He recalls visiting a bar with a fellow survivor, staring blankly at the wall where a dead friend once stood, and feeling "a numbing, deadening, saddening puzzlement" at the fact that "some of us were around and some of us were not". It's an extraordinary piece of writing, as rich in insight and profoundly moving as anything "the plague years" have produced.

The second essay, "Virtually Abnormal", tackles the issue he admits avoiding in his previous book, namely the origins of homosexuality. The old "nature or nurture?" debate has taken many turns in recent years, especially in America, where the current trend among gay activists is to put it down to biology. Faced with rightwing religious groups insisting that they have the power to "cure" people of their homosexuality, activists have gratefully accepted the theory of a "gay gene" which suggests that homosexuality is not only involuntary, but also immutable. Sullivan opts for the psychological approach, harking back to Freud and demonstrating how his theories on homosexuality have been distorted. According to Sullivan, Freud was far more interested in understanding homosexuality than in resolving it, something which generations of therapists have conveniently overlooked.

In "If Love Were All", the third and final essay, which describes how, during the Aids crisis, gay men came to appreciate the true value of friendship, Sullivan makes a convincing case for platonic love as the noblest of emotions in a society obsessed with sex and romance. Tackling the notion that heterosexuals have families while homosexuals are forced to make do with friends, he argues that both institutions are equally important, and that straight society actually has a lot to learn from the experience of gay men and women. "This is why the movement for homosexual liberation is actually a misnomer," he writes. It is a movement for human liberation, and heterosexuals stand to gain from it as much as anyone.

Let's hope some of them at least take the time to read this book.

The remains of times past

Paul Evans

A COLD fog rolls in, and even though the winter solstice is still a few weeks away, it's an icy fog that gets into the bones. Isolated by smoky-grey mist, the fields tighten and the caws of unseen crows drop sharp and flat into their sticky clay. Leaves still clinging to the beech trees are of a frazzled copper, and the oak, ash and lime leaves deepen the mulch in the woods with a beery smell.

Between the tussled waywardness of an old crab-apple and the great arching shovel-shafts of an ash, stretches a dark, scratchy hedge of blackthorn, quickthorn, hazel, elder and holly, strewn with red, plastic-like bryony berries. This hedgerow is much more than a line of trees and shrubs. The trees are well over a century old and the hedge may be three times older still. The ash tree is a visible marker of an old property boundary and pathway system.

The northern thrushes, fieldfares and redwings have recently arrived and will polish off the hedge berries. Countless birds, insects, small mammals and wild plants find refuge here from the intense arable farming of the fields. In leaf, the soft dividing lines of hedge and hedgerow trees, shaped by centuries of purpose, frame the fields and set the character of the place. But as sky and land become the same foggy medium, the leafless hedgerows seem to float free and wander. They wander into a darker, mythic countryside of imagination, fable and legend. And often they never come back.



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Britain has lost a phenomenal amount of hedge since the war, but no one is sure exactly how much. Between 1984 and 1993, England and Wales lost 185,600km of hedgerows. During the seventies and eighties farmers were given grants to grub them up until the public outcry slowed the march of big business agriculture.

According to a survey, 91 per cent of the population feel there is a moral duty to protect the countryside. Although rare wildlife species have a special place in people's affections, it is the defining features of the countryside, its hedges and trees, that provide the focus for popular conservation. A recent House of Commons select committee inquiry into the protection of hedgerows and other field boundaries warns of the risk of a "broken and dispirited" countryside if action is not taken by government. Some protection does exist, but it is piecemeal and complicated. Meanwhile hedgerows are still being lost, although nowadays this is mostly through neglect. Protecting and replacing hedges and other traditional field boundaries like dry-stone walls will require maintenance funding and more skilled people to keep the hedges in good nick.

Hedgerows have an ironic aspect. Though they have become icons of the countryside, many came into being on the back of oppressive 18th century land-grabbing measures which almost led to a revolution.

Much of what we like and passionately preserve as heritage has a dismal, bloody history. Winter hedgerows, stripped of their leaves are the bones of such a history. They loom like railings of a ship, sunk in an ocean of fog, raked by winter's chilling tides and binding their knotted secrets in a tangle of branches and roots which will never let go.

Chess Leonard Barden

TONY MILES, Britain's first grandmaster, has twice narrowly missed the later stages of world title eliminators. At Riga 1979 he steamed into the zonal lead until the strong Soviet contingent ganged up and inflicted heavy defeats. Then at Linares 1995 Miles looked sure to qualify for the rich Fide knock-out when he raced away from the field, but blew his chance spectacularly in the closing rounds.

In last month's Andorra zonal, Miles showed he had learned his lesson. With only 40 in the tournament and six to qualify for Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's $3 million Fide jackpot at Las Vegas, 6/9 was a good target.

So after winning his first three games, Miles drew the remaining six, mostly in less than 10 moves. Meanwhile Jon Speelman, on 5/8, was black against a strong Dutch GM who also needed to win. The Observer man's recipe for such situations is to open with the English Defence and provoke utter chaos. Here's the result, a slugfest with pieces flying on and off the board.

J Piket v J Speelman

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4 Bb7 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 f3 f5 6 exf5 Qh4+ 7 g3 Qf6 8 fxe6 Ne7 9 Bh3 h5 10 Bf4 dxe6 11 Qd2 Nbc6 12 0-0-0 Bxc3 13 Qxc3 g5 14 Be3 g4 15 fxg4 hxg4 16 Bxg4 Nb4 17 Qxb4 Bxh1 18 Nh3 Qg6 19 Bg5 c5 20 dxc5 Rxh3 21 Qd2 Rh7 22 Rxh1 Qe4 23 Rd1 Qxg4 24 Qd7+ Kf8 25 Bf4 Rxh2 26 c6 Qe2 27 Bd2 Qxc4+ 28 Kb1 Qe4+ 29 Resigns. If 29 Ka1 Rh1 liquidates to leave Black a rook up.

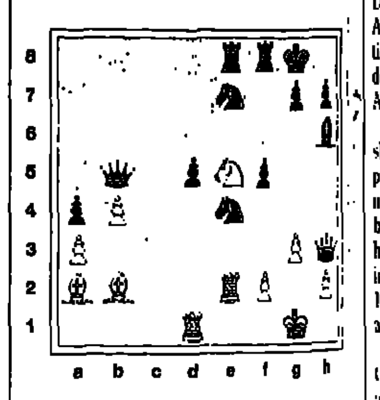
Eight survivors on 6/9 faced a 9am start and a rapid chess shoot-out to eliminate two of them. Miles drew every game and thus established a zany record of qualifying for a top event by drawing 13 games in succession. Speelman, winning one and drawing six, was co-winner.

So on to Las Vegas — if it happens. The $3 million, 100-player knockout was due to start last month, but the latest rescheduling is likely to see it held in June 1999.

If the championship does come off, England's quintet (Short, Adams and Sadler are already prequalified by high Fide ratings) will be guaranteed enough, even as first-round losers, to play the slot machines for a few days. More seriously, they will also have a chance to expunge bad memories of the Elista Olympiad, where England's team finished 11th.

● More than a third of the boys at the recent World U10 championship were U9s, and two U8s finished in the top 15. This is the tournament for which England's best U8 David Howell was judged "not ready yet". Meanwhile China, with two golds at the World Youth, is aiming to become a major chess power; its U9 won this mature strategic crush, while a Vietnamese U8 beat both the Russian and England's Murugan.

No 2552



Joel Benjamin v Eduard Gufeld, US Open 1998. New In Chess gives this finish where the loser has often boasted of his "Mona Lisa" win against Bagirov many years ago.

So the US champion and Deep Blue programmer Benjamin (White to play) provided his own commentary, sung to the Nat King Cole tune, to his brilliancy (sample: the annotation to White's third move reads, "Do you smile to tempt a sucker, Mona Lisa? Or is this your way of saying it's goodnight?"). See if you can spot the main variation.

No 2551: 1 Qe8+ Kg7 2 Re7+ Kh6 3 Qf8+ Kh5 4 Rxh7 mate.

Quick crossword no. 447

Across

1 Portable automatic firearm (10-3)
8 Letter rearrangement (7)
9 Erroneous (5)
10 Welcome — sort of shower (4)
11 Lazy (8)
13 Get back (6)
14 Spanish currency (6)
17 Tenant (8)
19 Reign (4)
21 Drone (5)
22 End of a flight (in two ways!) (7)
24 At a loss at what to do (2,4,4,3)

Down

1 Ocean (3)
2 Attitude — taken by a navigator (7)
3 Area measure (4)
4 Compassionate (6)
5 Parvenu (8)
6 Orb (5)
7 Bad dream (9)
10 Mouth organ (9)
12 Scatter (8)
15 Learned (7)
16 Colour — likely to run? (6)
18 Stringed instrument (5)
20 Single body (4)
23 Deity (3)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE Young Chelsea Bridge Club in London's Earls Court has been a prominent part of the English bridge scene for more than 20 years. In addition to providing the highest standard of duplicate bridge in London (and therefore one of the best games in the country), the club has been active in supporting British international teams, especially the Junior squads.

The Young Chelsea Marathon attracts an international field these days — the winning pair this year were Mark Teltsshcer, one of England's brightest young stars, and Boye Brogeland from Norway who, at the age of 26, is a bronze medallist in World Championship play at Open level. The club also acts as co-sponsor of the Lederer Memorial Trophy, a tournament in which the country's leading teams have the chance to compete against top-class international opposition.

I played in this year's Lederer with Andrew Robson, who divides his time these days between England and the United States. He won the prize for the best play of the tournament on this week's deal. Let me ask you this question: what would be your reaction if your opponents reached a slam contract and your hand included an ace and four trumps to the jack? I imagine that most of you might hold your cards a little closer to your chest, in the hope that declarer would misguess the trump position and lose a trick to your guarded jack. Let's see what happened. Love all, dealer North:

North
♠K107
♥K9652
♦KQ984
♣None

West
♠2
♥743
♦J1032
♣KQ972

East
♠J853
♥QJ
♦A76
♣10854

South
♠AQ964
♥A108
♦5
♣AJ63

South Charlsen	West Zia	North Erichsen	East Robson
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Dble	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

I led the king of clubs, which the Norwegian international Thomas Charlsen won with the ace. He led a diamond to dummy's king and Robson's ace. At this point, every other East player returned a club, hoping to force the dummy and establish a trump trick for the jack. Do you agree with this defence?

Andrew Robson looked more deeply into the position. He could see that if he played back a club, declarer would have no alternative but to attempt a complete cross-ruff, effectively allowing him to make the ace of clubs, the queen of diamonds, the ace and king of hearts, and all eight of his trumps via three club ruffs in dummy and five ruffs in his own hand.

If you follow the play, you'll see that Andrew was exactly right in this diagnosis. So, far from clutching his trump holding to his chest, Andrew Robson gave declarer the trump suit on a plate by leading a spade! Charlsen could still have made his contract by relying on the miraculous fall of the queen and jack of hearts — but, quite reasonably, he played to establish the long diamond in dummy. Now the 4-1 trump break did prove fatal, and he had to go one down.

Cricket Second Test Australia v England

Australia record emphatic victory

Mike Selvey in Perth

AUSTRALIA won the second Test last Monday just as they had seemed destined to do since the opening salvo of the match first put England on the canvas. Having bowled England out for 191 in their second innings, Australia required just 64 to win, and managed it by seven wickets, the game finishing an hour and a half after lunch, near halfway through the scheduled contest.

In the end it was the Waugh twins, Mark and Steve, who saw their side home, but not before Darren Gough, Alan Mullally and Alex Tudor had given the opposition something upon which to ponder before the third Test begins in Adelaide next week.

Each took a wicket as Australia slumped to 36 for three, and prompted the question as to what might have happened had England batted better in the first innings, held catches — another went down in the brief second innings making 10 in the series so far — and made another 100 runs in the second.

Earlier Mark Ramprakash and Graeme Hick had taken their sixth-wicket partnership to 91 before Hick was caught at third slip off Jason Gillespie's third ball of the day for 68, the game's top score.

Gillespie then embarked upon a mopping up exercise that saw him finish off the innings with a spell of four wickets for one run in six deliveries, giving him 5 for 88 in all, quite a comeback after the mauling he received from Hick last Sunday.

While the tail collapsed ignominiously in the face of some fiery bowling, Ramprakash held firm, and after four and a half hours had reached 47 not out when Mullally backed away timidly and was bowled by a full toss from Gillespie.

So the psychological as well as the actual advantage rests with Australia, who will now go into the next Test knowing that as holders one more win would secure the Ashes for another two years. England, on the other hand, need to win at least two of the last three games.

England can take some comfort from the fact that the series is following a pattern not unlike last summer where they came from behind to snatch a win over South Africa. It is not impossible to do the same again, just extremely unlikely.

After the match, Alec Stewart, the England captain, said that the batting in the first innings, when England were bowled out for 112, held the key to the game. "It is one of the poorest first innings performances I can remember," he added.

England had begun the third day on 126 for five, two runs shy of an innings defeat after Australia had made 240 runs in their first innings.

Hick was still there and so was hope. But after 40 minutes' play, Gillespie replaced McGrath at the River End, and made the breakthrough, as Hick tried to force off the back foot but edged to Ponting.

This innings was a genuine hit-or-bust effort from a fellow who, having dropped a couple of catches and made a duck in the first innings, believed there was little to lose from going down with guns blazing. He may have achieved his aim: with Graham Thorpe continuing to suffer back problems, Hick will now stay for the rest of the tour.

● South Africa held their nerve to beat the West Indies by four wickets in the low-scoring first Test in Johannesburg. Shaun Pollock, the man of the match, was the pick of the bowlers with a nine-wicket haul. In Peshawar Zimbabwe won their first overseas Test with a seven-wicket victory over Pakistan after skittling out the home side for 103 in their second innings.

Gillespie traps Gough lbw for nought PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM CHADWICK

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Arsenal's European guns silenced

ARSENAL are out of the European Champions League, knocked out by Lens with a solitary goal at Wembley. The defeat once again exposed the lack of top-quality players among the London club's reserves. The Gunners needed a win to keep alive their hopes of qualifying for the quarter-finals from Group E, but the loss of three key players, Dennis Bergkamp and Patrick Vieira through injuries plus the suspended Emmanuel Petit, left the side short of the experience necessary to mount a serious challenge to the French champions.

The damage was done on 72 minutes when Mickael Debeve scored the only goal of the match to keep his side in with a quarter-final chance. Christopher Wreh, Ray Parlour and Marc Overmars were denied by Guillaume Warmuz, while the French kept David Seaman busy in the Arsenal goal. The game exploded in injury-time when Parlour was sent off for retaliation and then Lens' Tony Vairelles was dismissed after a clash with Lee Dixon.

In Group D, Manchester United were involved in a six-goal spectacular with Barcelona. They threw away the lead twice in a game that see-sawed madly before the Spanish side bowed out of the competition after the match ended in a 3-3 draw. Barcelona went ahead in the first minute when Sonny Anderson evaded Gary Neville to fire into the corner. Dwight Yorke rifled in an equaliser from a pass by Jesper Blomqvist and then set up Andy Cole to slide home the second. Rivaldo's free-kick levelled it. Yorke headed United back in front, but Rivaldo replied with an overhead kick.

United will have to beat Bayern Munich — who defeated Brondby 2-0 to go top of the group — at Old Trafford to be sure of progressing to the last eight. A draw may be enough for Alex Ferguson's team to qualify as one of the two best runners-up.

In the Uefa Cup, a goal in injury-time by substitute Vladimir Gudelj left Liverpool with only a slim chance of making the quarter-finals at the expense of Celta Vigo.

The strike helped the Spanish side to a 3-1 first-leg victory over the Merseysiders. Liverpool took the lead against the run of play in the third-round tie when Michael Owen left a flat-footed defence in his wake and raced on to convert David Thompson's long ball in the 35th minute. The Russian pair, Alexandre Mostovoi and Valeri Karpin, put the hosts back in control. But Liverpool were seconds away from returning home with a retrievable deficit, when Gudelj sneaked in to stab home the third.

In Scotland, Rod Wallace's third goal in the competition this season earned Rangers a 1-1 draw against Parma in the third-round, first-leg tie. Nearly 50,000 supporters exploded with joy when Wallace controlled Colin Hendry's downward header and fired the ball past keeper Gianluigi Buffon. The Italians, who had taken the heat out of Rangers with their pressing game, went ahead on 51st minute when Abel Balbo was first to react after Antti Niemi had saved Hernan Crespo's shot. Rangers also lifted their first trophy of the season when they beat St Johnstone 2-1 in the Scottish League Cup final at Celtic Park.

WHEN Jane Couch stepped into the boxing ring in London last week, she marched straight into record books — as the first professional woman boxer in Britain. Known as the Fleetwood Assassin, Jane, aged 30, gained a professional licence only after taking the Boxing Board of Control to the Equal Opportunities Commission. And she made short work of her first bout, stopping her opponent, Simona Lukic, an 18-year-old Yugoslav based in Germany, after just 184 seconds. Her victory purse? A mere $2,000.

SCOTLAND'S John Higgins completed a rare snooker double at Bournemouth when he added the UK Championship to the world title by overcoming Matthew Stevens of Wales 10-6.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal 1, Middlesbrough 1; Charlton 1, Everton 2; Chelsea 1, Sheff Wed 1; Coventry 1, Leicester 1; Liverpool 2, Blackburn 0; Man Utd 3, Leeds 2; Newcastle 3, Wimbledon 1; Nottm Forest 2, Aston Villa 2; Southampton 0, Derby 1; West Ham 2, Tottenham 1.
Leading positions: 1, Aston Villa (played 14-points 29); 2, Man Utd (14-28); 3, West Ham (15-26).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
First Division
Barnsley 7, Huddersfield 1; Birmingham 4, Bristol City 2; Bolton 4, Bury 0; Bradford C 0, QPR 3; Crewe 0, Ipswich 3; C Palace 2, Watford 2; Grimsby 1, Swindon 0; Norwich 1, Oxford Utd 3; Port Vale 2, Tranmere 2; Sheff Utd 0, Sunderland 4; Stockport 2, Portsmouth 0; West Brom 2, Wolves 0.
Leading positions: 1, Sunderland (20-43); 2, Ipswich (20-38); 3, Watford (21-38).

Second Division
Bristol R 2, Oldham 2; Burnley 1, Blackpool 0; Chesterfield 2, Macclesfield 0; Colchester 0, Millwall 0; Gillingham 1, Fulham 0; Luton 1, Man City 1; Preston 2, Wigan 2; Reading 2, Lincoln 1; Walsall 1, Bournemouth 0; Wrexham 1, Notts Co 0; Wycombe 0, Stoke 1; York 1, Northampton 1.
Leading positions: 1, Stoke (20-43); 2, Walsall (20-39); 3, Fulham (18-39).

Third Division
Barnet 3, Torquay 1; Brentford 2, Chester 1; Cardiff 2, Southend 0; Darlington 3, Scarborough 0; Halifax 2, Mansfield 2; Hartlepool 1, Swansea 2; Hull 1, Carlisle 0; Peterborough 2, Scunthorpe 1; Plymouth 2, Leyton Orient 4; Rochdale P, Cambridge P; Shrewsbury 1, Brighton 3.
Leading positions: 1, Halifax (20-36); 2, Leyton Orient (20-34); 3, Cardiff (19-34).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE CUP FINAL
Rangers 2, St Johnstone 1.

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Aberdeen 0, Dundee Utd 3; Celtic 2, Motherwell 0; Dunfermline 0, Kilmarnock 3.
Leading positions: 1, Rangers (15-30); 2, Kilmarnock (15-28); 3, Celtic (16-26).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
First Division
Ayr 1, St Mirren 1; Clydebank 1, Raith 1; Falkirk 2, Hamilton 1; Hibernian 1, Airdrie 0; Stranraer 2, Morton 3.
Leading positions: 1, Hibernian (17-35); 2, Ayr (17-33); 3, Falkirk (17-32).

Second Division
Alloa 2, Queen of Sth 1; Clyde 3, Arbroath 0; East Fife 2, Stirling Alb 3; Forfar 2, Inverness CT 2; Partick 1, Livingston 3.
Leading positions: 1, Livingston (17-40); 2, Inverness CT (17-35); 3, Clyde (17-29).

Third Division
Albion 1, Stenhousemuir 3; Berwick 3, Brechin 0; Montrose 2, East Stirling 0; Queens Pk 2, Cowdenbeath 0; Ross Co 2, Dumbarton 0.
Leading positions: 1, Ross County (17-39); 2, Brechin (17-33); 3, Stenhousemuir (17-30).

Rugby Union

England let victory slip

Robert Armstrong

ENGLAND came agonisingly close to the elusive victory over a major southern hemisphere nation that would have signalled their coming of age as competitors on the world stage. They scored the only try through Jeremy Guscott 10 minutes from the end of their Cook Cup international, but when it was time to make the kill, Australia — and in particular their goal-kicking captain John Eales — proved as implacable as an executioner, running 12-11 winners.

The spoils of Test rugby often go to those who commit fewer errors, and so it proved as England infringed at inconvenient moments whereas the Wallabies pursued risk-free tactics and kicked the goals that mattered.

Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain, insisted his gutsy, tenacious side could have — indeed should have — won in view of the significant gains made by their forwards, yet the seeds of their downfall lay in a failure to translate pressure into points for well over an hour. The loss of their fly-half Paul Grayson with an injured knee after 32 minutes proved crucial: his replacement Mike Catt rarely managed to give shape to England's intermittent enterprise.

The Wallabies flew home having put down an important marker for next year's World Cup with victories over the northern hemisphere's only serious contenders, France and England, and 11 wins in 13 tests.

There was nothing to choose between the teams in terms of pace, whether it was over 10 metres or 40; each time Guscott, Catt or the Australian flier Joe Roff tried to show the opposition a clean pair of heels he was pulled down well short of the line. Catt did race clear once — and off-loaded to one of the touch judges, Paddy O'Brien; on another occasion the Bath No 10 was dispossessed in a one-on-one when a grub kick or a chip-and-chase were obvious options.

Only once did England pull all the pieces together and scatter the Wallabies with a scoring move that briefly trailed clouds of glory. After Martin Johnson won a restart, Austin Healey, Matt Perry and Darren Garforth in turn ran deep into the Australia defence before Matt Dawson and Catt combined to sweep the ball away from the ruck to Guscott, who crashed over on the right.

However, England's 11-9 lead was short-lived: four minutes from time Catt's previous failure to kick the conversion was duly punished by Eales, who steered home his fourth penalty goal after a ruck offence by Neil Back.

● Ireland failed to stop South Africa at Lansdowne Road, going down 13-27 after a spirited performance. On Saturday only England now stand between Gary Teichmann's team and an 18th consecutive Test victory, which would place them above every other side in the game's history and complete a tour grand slam.

